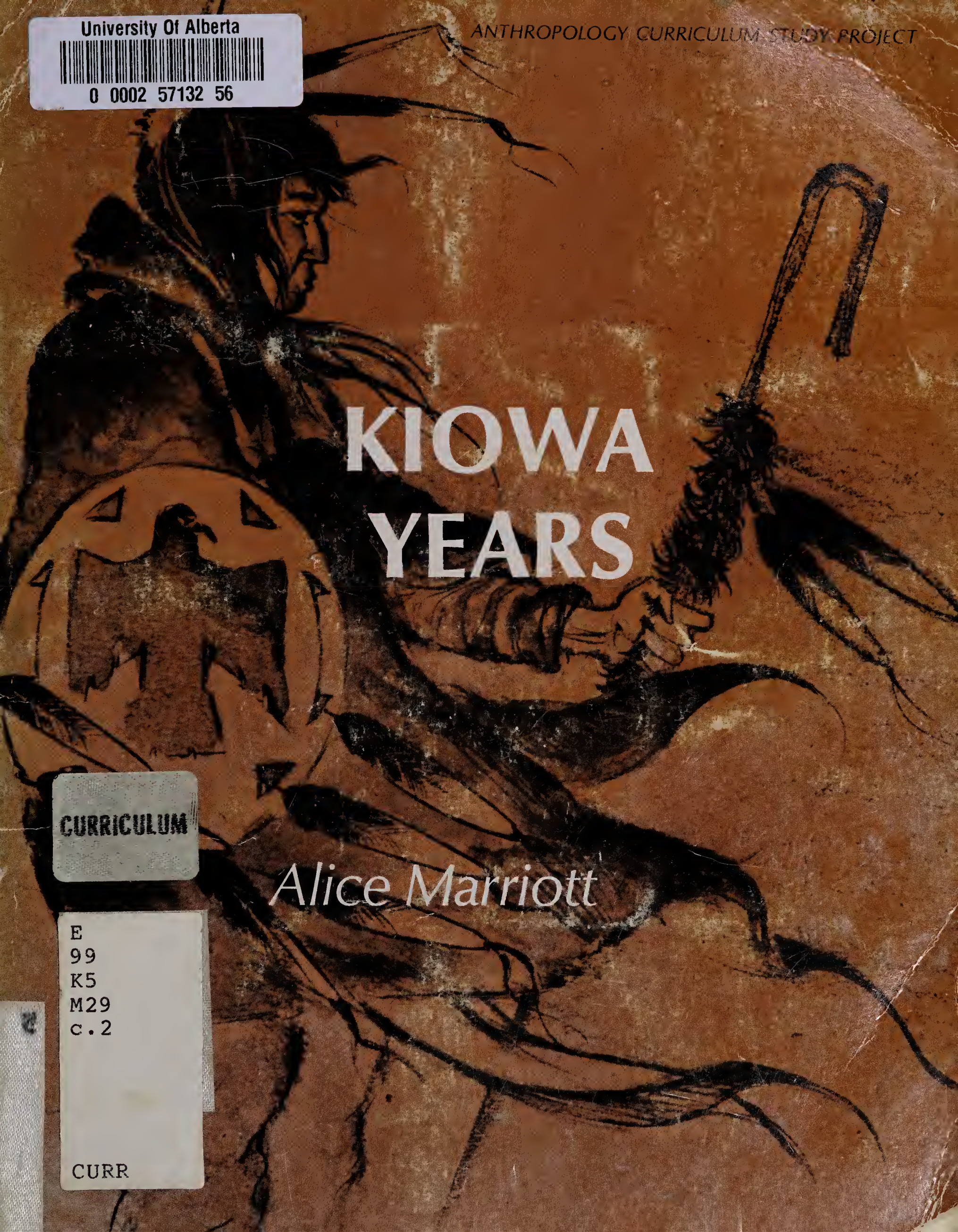
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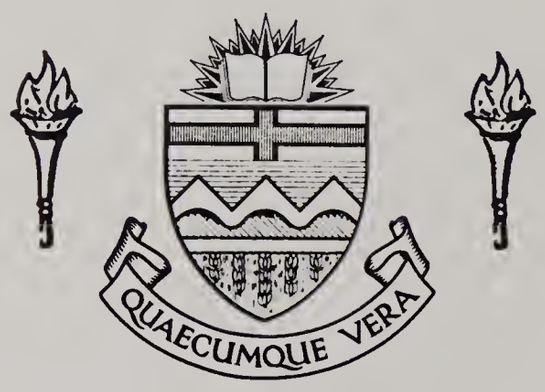
Alice Marriott

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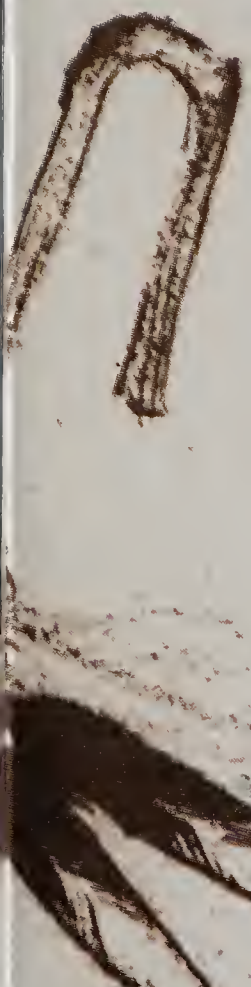
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# KIOWA YEARS

*A Study in Culture Impact*





# KIOWA YEARS

## *A Study in Culture Impact*

by Alice Marriott

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# TO THE READER

THIS BOOK IS a slice of American history. It is told to you as it was told to me, long ago, when some of the people who took part in these events were alive.

The story is told as the Indians saw and felt and understood what happened, but it can be confirmed by comparing the Indian account with those of white soldiers, traders, and missionaries.

They all agree on the main facts. No two eyewitnesses to a modern automobile accident have ever been known to agree completely, for everyone sees things his own way. We should not expect historical documents to agree on all details.

Eagle Plume was an old, old man, and Sitting Bear's youngest granddaughter was a grown woman when I first went to western Oklahoma to study the Kiowas. Eagle Plume was blind, but his mind was clear, and he saw brilliantly through its inner eye the happenings of his young manhood. Sitting Bear's granddaughter interpreted his words as we sat in a tipi or under a summer arbor of willow branches. Wherever we sat, one of the Ten Grandmothers, the Kiowa medicine bundles, hung just above our heads. No one can tell a lie in front of one of the Grandmothers.

So, although this is history told from an unfamiliar point of view, it is still history. It tells of the real activities of real people, who lived in this way less than one hundred years ago. Remember, on the familiar side of that history, that it took place during the time that diesel engines, automobiles, airplanes, central heating, and many other things that we all take for granted today were being invented. In some ways, the white man's side of this history is as foreign to our own way of life as the Indian's side.

Oklahoma City
October, 1967

Alice Marriott


NEBRASKA
IOWA
Shoshonis
COLORADO
N
KANSAS
Arapahos
Arkansas (Arrowhead) River
Utes
Cut tipi poles in this area
Pawnees
MISSOURI
Cheyennes
Medicine Lodge
Osages and Otos
Salt Plain
OKLAHOMA
(Black Shiny Hills)
Taos
Glass Mts.
Canadian (Runs Across) River
ARKANSAS
North Fork
Caddos
Red Rock Standing (AnadarKo)
Pecos
Edge of the mountains
Washita (Tipi Pole) River
Peace Spring (Tucumcari)
End of the mountains
Cut Throat Gap
Big Bend
Stinking Water Creek
Wichita Mts. (Granite or Standing Mts.)
Fort Sill
NEW MEXICO
Red (River that Runs Red) River
Wichita Groups
Comanches
Trading Area
Staked Plains
Sitting Bear's Trip
Raiding Area of Small Scattered White Settlements
Cross Timbers
LOUI-SIANA
Davis (Broken Mts.)
Waco
Fort Davis
TEXAS
Houston
San Antonio
COAHUILA
MEXICO
Rio Grande
Sierra Madre
Trading Area
KIOWA COUNTRY
1868–1870
trees
mountains
heartland
scale
0
100
200
miles

# PERSONS IN THE STORY

***Anko:*** Famous painter of tipis and robes. He was also painter and keeper of one of the Kiowa year counts, from which James Mooney recorded his "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians" (see bibliography). Anko's calendar is still in existence in the Smithsonian Institution.

***Big Tree:*** Band leader and peace chief, captured with Sitting Bear and White Bear at Fort Sill, but later released to become a Christian convert and leading Baptist layman. He died at Rainy Mountain, Oklahoma, in the 1920's.

***Black Kettle:*** Cheyenne peace chief and bundle-keeper, whose camp on the Washita River was butchered by Colonel George A. Custer in 1869.

***Bluff Standing (Dawhawsan):*** The last chief of all the Kiowa bands. His death led to the splitting apart of bands, until each was almost a separate tribe. Only a man of enormous courage, determination, and respect could have reunited them. Bluff Standing is sometimes confused with a son who took his name and joined forces with Kicking Bird against the more war-like Kiowa bands.

***Calls Eagles:*** A young man who violated the rule of silence in a buffalo hunt and was punished by the Gourd Dancers under White Bear's leadership.

***Cloud Woman:*** Sitting Bear's third wife.

***Eagle Boy:*** Sitting Bear's youngest son. As Joshua Givens he was sent to school at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and returned to his tribe as an ordained Episcopal priest. He died soon afterwards from exposure and tuberculosis.

***Eagle Plume:*** Sitting Bear's oldest surviving son, from whom most of the material in this book was recorded.

***Kicking Bird:*** "Traitor" or "Great Peace Chief," depending on one's point of view. He was the first of the Kiowa band chiefs to take "the white man's road," welcome whites into his camp, and to surrender to the United States Army. His enemies called him "coffee cooler" because he hung around Fort Sill and the trading post; his friends and descendants speak of him as a man of great foresight and integrity. Take your choice.

***Limping Antelope:*** Cheyenne peace chief, who died with Black Kettle at the "battle" of the Washita. The town of Lame Deer, Montana, was named through a misinterpretation of his name.

***Little Bluff:*** A son of Bluff Standing, and a noted band chief in his own right.

***Lone Wolf:*** Band chief, war chief, and loyal friend. He escaped capture with the other leading band chiefs at Fort Sill and eventually became a Christian convert and leader on "the peace road."

***Packing Rocks (Tsoodle):*** Friend of Young Sitting Bear's from boyhood, fellow Gourd Dance member, and eventually keeper of one of the Ten Grandmothers. Marguerite Tsoodle, whose grandfather, White Bear's grandson, was his namesake, originally typed this manuscript.

***Paws Ground:*** A Buffalo Doctor, or member of the secret society which had power to cure wounds.

***Quanah Parker:*** Son of Cynthia Anne Parker, who was captured by the Comanches in her childhood, and of the leader of the Quahadie band of the Comanches. A leader among his people, who as a young man established a reputation as a war chief, and later took "the white man's road," becoming noted as a cattle-raiser and as an intermediary between the other Indians and Woossinton. He was also a leader in the introduction of the Native American (peyote) Church.

***Running Water:*** Sitting Bear's second wife.

***Singing Girl:*** Sitting Bear's youngest daughter. Educated at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, she later returned to the Kiowa country, where she married George Hunt, an interpreter at Fort Sill. She died in the 1920's. Her younger daughter, Ioleta Hunt MacElhaney, was the first Kiowa woman to receive a college degree, and both Mrs. MacElhaney and her sister, Mrs. Margaret (George) Hunt Tsoodle, served as interpreters in collecting the material in this book.

***Sitting Bear:*** Also known in written history as Satank due to a mispronunciation of his Kiowa name. A war leader, medicine man, band chief, and probably the strongest single character of this period of Kiowa history. He was in no sense a typical Kiowa, as his defiance of the death taboo clearly proves.

***Spring Leaf:*** Eagle Plume's wife.

***Straight Walking Woman:*** Sitting Bear's fourth wife, and his favorite among them all.

***Tamma:*** Thomas C. Battey, a Quaker teacher from Iowa, who was "moved" by his faith to go among the Red Children of God and teach them the white man's ways. Welcomed by Kicking Bird, and given an honored place in his camp, Tamma, as the Kiowas always called him, was barely tolerated by Sitting Bear. In spite of himself, Tamma was forced to admit that the feeling was mutual.

***White Bear:*** Known as Satanta in written history through a mispronunciation of his Kiowa name. A chief second in prominence only to Sitting Bear, he greatly impressed all white men who encountered him, and his eloquence made him known by newspaper men of the time as "The Orator of the Plains." After capture, he committed suicide by jumping from the second floor window of the Federal Prison at Huntsville, Texas, and dashing out his brains on the cobblestones below. Miss Marguerite Tsoodle, already referred to, was his great-granddaughter.

***White Shell Woman:*** Sitting Bear's first wife, and the strongest character as well as leader among the women of his family.

***Wood Smoke:*** Orphaned in boyhood, he grew up to serve as Kiowa interpreter for the post commandants at Fort Sill. During the period covered in this book, he was the Kiowa interpreter for General Philip Sheridan. Many Kiowas blame misinterpretations and exploitation of their land rights on him. He has no known living descendants.

***Young Lone Wolf:*** Son of Chief Lone Wolf, and brother-friend of Young Sitting Bear. He was killed on a raid into the Davis Mountains, Jeff Davis County, Texas, in 1870.

***Young Sitting Bear:*** Middle son and favorite child of Chief Sitting Bear. He was what is known in Kiowa as *awday*, or an honored child, as was his brother-friend Young Lone Wolf. The two joined the Gourd Dance Society together and died together.



# CHAPTER ONE

## *THE WINTER THE BUGLE WAS BLOWN: 1869*

THE WIND, ENDLESSLY SEARCHING the Plains for a song it had lost but not quite forgotten, found music in Sitting Bear's camp. It was the Winter the Bugle was Blown. The troopers who had recently started building a permanent camp on the south bank of Stinking Water Creek counted their years in numbers; they called it 1869.

In the camp, within the Big Bend of the Tipi Pole River, the people were busy. Hunting had been hard for the last few years, but suddenly, during the previous summer, buffalo herds had moved down from the north, and game became plentiful again on the Southern Plains. The Kiowas had hunted as they had never hunted before, and stacks of dried meat and stone-hard rawhides had accumulated into piles so high that Sitting Bear ordered the people to winter camp early, in October, so the women could begin work on the skins while the days were still warm.

The Big Bend was a good place for a winter camp. Sitting Bear's first wife had pointed it out to him years before, when they were young people just starting out. At that time they, with Sitting Bear's two brothers and their wives and children, had been what the Kiowas called a Lonely Band Family, camping and working alone.

As time went on and Sitting Bear gathered and bred horses, and as he and his brothers chose their second wives from leading families, their

band had grown. Now they could call themselves the Big Shields, and, truly, in some ways they were the shields between the Kiowas and the oncoming white settlers.

As the band grew in strength, its men grew fiercer. They raided Pawnee villages to the north of them; they stormed down into Texas and attacked the white homesteads to the south. War power—the Kiowas all said that Sitting Bear had war power.

He changed as he grew older. His war power was so strong that no one man, not even Sitting Bear, dared to hold it all. So he divided it with his brothers and some of their friends, and they formed a society which they called the Crazy Dogs. Only a man who had proved he had war power of his own could join the Crazy Dogs and share its place and its prestige. Some men who were invited to join even refused the honor. Crazy, indeed, those Dogs were—crazy enough to kill themselves, the nonjoiners said.

Sitting Bear danced and fought with the Crazy Dogs, but then another power urged him to take a different direction. He became aware of his power to work magic—to change a feather into a knife and back into a feather again, to cure people of sicknesses, and to heal the broken hearts of young lovers. This power came to Sitting Bear after he inherited his uncle's duties as a keeper of one of the magic Kiowa medicine bundles called the Ten Grandmothers.*

So Sitting Bear organized another society, a sacred secret society which included the best men he could find. He chose them for their honor and their decency, and he himself made and painted a shield for each member. On each shield a great, peaceful, green-painted eagle spread its wings to show that it would protect all the people and would defend them with its power. Protection was the power of the heart, for all the Kiowas knew that thought lives in the heart and that men feel and express themselves with their hearts. Only if a member of the secret society dropped his knife point down in the fire could this power turn and destroy him.

* The Ten Grandmothers: The ten guardian medicine bundles of the Kiowas. One burned in 1940, and as far as the writer knows has not been replaced. The other nine still exist, however. At present there is some talk, among "progressive" Kiowas, of placing them in a regional museum, but whether this will actually be done the writer does not, of course, know.

Power to fight, power to heal, power to pray—Sitting Bear had all three of these when he was a man in his thirties. He was past forty when the fourth power came to him—the power of love. That was when he visited White Bear's camp one summer, and saw Little Bluff's oldest daughter, Straight Walking Woman, walk across the sun-dancing prairie through the blazing midday light, and watched her bend to help an old woman off the ground and into a pool of cool shade. Then Sitting Bear knew what it was to love a woman.

His older wives agreed that it would be good for him to take the young one. The three sisters whom he had married when he was in his twenties were alive and healthy and strong, but now they were Sitting Bear's companions, not his sweethearts. They enjoyed each other's company, as well as their husband's, and they had their own circle of friends. Let him take a younger wife, if she were willing and her father and brothers gave permission. It meant an alliance with Little Bluff, and that, in turn, meant an alliance with White Bear and the Bull Elk Band. Perhaps, if the Pawnees, with the white men behind them, kept pushing south, everybody would need allies. The scattered bands of the Kiowas were already coming closer together; it seemed as if, in whatever direction you rode, you heard people speaking your own language. Soon the Kiowas would be right on top of each other, all living together, like the Wichitas, who lived down at Edge of the Mountains.

Sitting Bear laughed at the idea and told the women not to worry. Since the Plains stretched from the Cross Timbers on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west, and nobody knew for sure how far to south and north, there was plenty of room for everyone. So they needn't worry about having stranger bands within a day's ride of them.

But that had been twenty years ago, and now, although Sitting Bear did not mention it to them, he knew in his heart the women had been right. Things had changed in the world around the Kiowas, and it was the white men who had changed them. Only the winter before, Sitting Bear had invited the chiefs of all the bands to meet at a place on Arrowhead River with the Cheyenne chiefs and the eight peace leaders of the Arapahos, as well as with some Comanches who were noted more for their hard riding than for the way their tribe was organized, but who could not be ignored. The meeting was held to talk with some white men about dividing Indian lands to make room for white settlers.

By chance, the white men had chosen a spot where the Cheyennes had held their Sun Dance the previous summer, and, by mutual agreement, all the parties at the conference called the little stream that flowed past the meadow on its way to the main river Medicine Lodge Creek. Here the white men laid out their plans for living in the Plains. Here they told the Indians what would be expected of them if they were to be allowed to continue living in their homes forever.

White Bear made a great speech which one of the Comanches translated for the white general. He said that the Indians were used to living on the plains and the white men were not. Perhaps the white men had better find out what to do and how to do it, before they began granting Indians permission to live in their own homes.

The white general listened to the translation of the speech. Then he pointed to a horse-drawn gun and said, "Tell them that's my passport." When the Comanche translated it, Black Kettle, the old, respected Cheyenne peace chief, spoke: "There is room for everybody, but there are no buffaloes left around here; it is time for us all to go home." And he and his band led the way while the rest followed. Only a few men remained to mark little stars on a piece of paper, which the white men showed them how to do.

Now, in the winter camp beside the Tipi Pole River, Sitting Bear was beginning to worry. Nothing had been said at Medicine Lodge Creek about the camp that the soldiers were building for themselves down on Stinking Water. Nothing that Sitting Bear could remember had been said about the prickly-wire fences which some of the white settlers were using to close the old trails. Certainly nothing had been said about the white hunters who, with their wagonloads of guns and ammunition, followed the herds and shot the buffaloes—just to waste and destroy, not to use the game.

The children he had from his first wives were grown and married. The older son of his last wife was nineteen, old enough to ride a war trail and leave the boys' society, the Herders, for a men's dancing society. The two younger children, the boy and the girl, were just old enough to run around the camp and get into trouble. Sitting Bear did not allow himself to think about what their lives would be when they reached Young Sitting Bear's present age. Things were changing so fast that those children might end their lives living like white men.

Singing Girl and Eagle Boy they might be called now. Who knew what their grown-up names would be?

It was a time of darkness for all the Indians. Some white soldiers had wiped out Black Kettle's camp the year before, and the old man had died among the blazing tipis, holding the white man's flag that the general had given him at Medicine Lodge as long as he could grasp it. He cried out again and again, in his own language and in Comanche, that his was a peace camp, with many women and children, but the soldiers kept on firing as if they didn't understand a word he said.

Even with pressures and problems, life was good in Sitting Bear's camp. The stacked hides promised clothing and shelter. The tightly stuffed rawhide envelopes leaning against the backboards of the beds promised food. The Kiowas were rich; they had as many horses as they could pasture. When the people needed sugar or corn meal, or cloth for red-and-blue blankets, they had horses to trade for these luxuries.

Only the leader thought of the problems, anyway. It was his job. Meanwhile, the young men of the Gourd Dance Society were singing in their yellow-painted tipi across the camp. White Bear had come to visit three days ago, and he was a member of the Gourd Dancers. Tonight, probably, his society would honor him with a dance and a feast. The Kiowas had lived on the Southern Plains since they left the north country a hundred years ago. Sitting Bear hoped that the Kiowas would live where they were forever.



# CHAPTER TWO

## *THE MAKING OF A MAN: 1869*

WHEN SITTING BEAR SAW the men leave the Gourd Dancers' tipi, he guessed they were coming to his camp. Quickly, he went inside the tipi and said to his fourth wife, "You had better tell our older son to get ready. People are looking for him."

Straight Walking Woman ducked under the edge of the tipi, behind the spot where her husband seated himself. He settled into the honored place on the west side and reached for his old bone pipe. Straight Walking Woman would find the boy, who was out with his parents' herds, and bring him back. She could clean him up in one of her sister-wives' tipis, and get him dressed and painted. In the meantime, Sitting Bear's first wife came from her tipi to lay back the door flaps on the front of her husband's. Everyone in camp could see him sitting there, guarding his family like the bear he was named for.

White Bear walked across the camp, stepping slowly and deliberately. Behind him were the other Gourd Dancers. First two of the older men came, each holding one end of a red stone pipe with a carved wooden stem; the younger members bunched behind them. Each man wore a red-and-blue blanket, moccasins with long, yellow heel trailers, and a string of steel beads. Each man had his face painted red on the cheekbones and yellow on the chin and forehead, and each man carried

his yellow-painted gourd rattle in his right hand and a flicker-feather fan in his left.

White Bear stopped directly in front of Sitting Bear's tipi, looking at it as if the flaps were drawn and Sitting Bear invisible. He said to White Shell Woman, Sitting Bear's first wife,

"Good morning, Mother."

"Good morning, Son," she returned. She was related to White Bear's mother, so she and White Bear always addressed one another in kinship terms. "Get down," said White Shell Woman, as if White Bear had come on horseback. It was the only polite way she knew to ask him into the tipi.

"Is your son at home?" White Bear asked.

"He's away with the herds," she answered, "but his father is here. Come and smoke with him."

White Bear turned to the other Gourd Dancers and made a sign with his hand. They followed him into the tipi.

One at a time, White Bear leading, they walked past Straight Walking Woman's cooking place at the south side of the door, and around to where Sitting Bear sat on the west. One at a time, White Bear first, they shook hands with Sitting Bear and passed behind him to take their places on the north side of the tipi. No one could walk in front of the chiefs. Each man in turn seated himself while the others walked behind the waiting groups. The north side of the tipi was filled first, and the younger men had to sit on the women's side, facing the older ones.

Sitting Bear glanced sidewise at White Bear. Even sitting down, White Bear was far taller and a bigger man, physically, in every way. His shoulders were broad, and he held them square; he had the big, solid hands of a man who has worked with them all his life. His moccasins probably used up twice as much hide as Sitting Bear's.

All the Gourd Dancers were big men. They filled the tipi to the bulging point. Sitting Bear studied them. They were big; they were hard riders and fighters and dancers. No other men's society could equal them as game wardens and camp police. They were aggressive; they took action as soon as it was needed. Sometimes, to Sitting Bear's way of thinking, the Gourd Dancers took action before they needed to.

All the same, it was a good society for a young man to join. Later Young Sitting Bear could join the Black Legs or the Horse Tail Dancers,

if he wanted to. Eagle Plume, Sitting Bear's oldest son, was already a member of the Black Legs, and if the boy should want to join, Eagle Plume would take him in. By that time, Young Sitting Bear would have learned from the Gourd Dancers how to get along and work with other people. Training with these big, tough men would do him good.

Sitting Bear reached behind him and picked up his beaded pipe bag. Black Kettle had given it to him at the Medicine Lodge encampment. As he automatically took out the red stone ceremonial pipe, which he had gotten from Limping Antelope, the Northern Cheyenne chief, Sitting Bear thought that he ought to have burned the pipe bag when Black Kettle died. It was bad luck to keep what had belonged to the dead. But Black Kettle, his friend, had given it to him, and Sitting Bear wanted a keepsake.

Sitting Bear reached with two crossed sticks for a coal from the fire and lighted the pipe. East, south, west, and north, he saluted the corners of the world; up and down, the sky and the earth. He passed the pipe to White Bear, who smoked and handed it on to Frizzlehead. One man at a time, the pipe went around the northern curve of the tipi, and the young man by the door returned it to Sitting Bear.

No one spoke while Sitting Bear refilled and relit his pipe and started it along the south side of the tipi. They all waited until the last young man nearest the door had smoked in turn, just managing not to cough.

"Where are you going, friend?" Sitting Bear asked then.

"To Stinking Water," White Bear answered. "Kicking Bird has a camp down there. I thought I might go and talk to him."

Sitting Bear nodded. "Kicking Bird's been making some new friends," he said dryly.

"That Wichita!" White Bear spat out. "Anyone can tell he isn't full-blood Kiowa. A Mexican mother and a Wichita grandfather. No wonder he's letting the soldiers run all over the place there. What's the good of it? He'll never get anything out of *them*."

"Nobody else has," Sitting Bear agreed.

"And Kicking Bird won't. He'll just make trouble for the rest of us. The only way to handle these white men is to get rid of them—make up our minds to it and clear them out. If we don't, they'll get rid of us." White Bear slammed his hand down on his knee, then picked his

hand up and shook it, and looked at it curiously. "That hurt," he observed.

"Anything about the white soldiers hurts," Sitting Bear said. "We are taking a risk letting them stay on here. Medicine Lodge—nobody said anything about letting them come into our country and build places to stay when we were at Medicine Lodge."

"Kicking Bird told them they could," White Bear snorted. "He put his scratch on that piece of paper, like a vulture's track. Now he's giving them permission to build down there. All the rest of us stood against it, but Kicking Bird and his bunch—they don't care about anybody else. Just so they get enough coffee and some sugar to stir into it. That's all they want."

One of the younger men, Packing Rocks, stirred in his place. Sitting Bear guessed that the Gourd Dancers had heard it all from White Bear before. White Bear would stir up trouble for everybody yet. And if White Bear didn't do it one way, Kicking Bird almost certainly would in another. Somebody had to make peace between them to keep the Kiowas from eating themselves up.

"I understand you came to see my son," Sitting Bear said. White Bear accepted the change of subject.

"That's what we were thinking about," he remarked. "He hasn't joined any other society, has he?"

"Just the Rabbits," said Sitting Bear, laughing.

Everyone smiled, remembering the days when each of them had been a little boy, dancing with his hands flapping beside his cheeks to represent a rabbit's ears.

"And now he's a Herder," Sitting Bear added. They all smiled again. They had been there, too. The Herders were twelve years old and up. They sometimes went with war parties, where they waited on the men, cooked for them, and held their horses while they were fighting. The Herders also cared for the horses when the whole band was camped. Everyone had to go through it, take his turn at being a servant of the older men. In that way, a boy learned to obey orders and not to go off by himself, scaring the game herds and stirring up needless fights.

There was a movement at the door, and White Shell Woman entered the tipi. Her two sisters followed her. The women all carried brass kettles of food which they set down beside the fire. From their

belts, the women unhitched the strings of gourd bowls that a chief's family kept on hand for guests, and laid the bowls before the men. The men unfastened their buffalo-horn spoons from their belts. Some had brought their own wooden bowls.

"Sit and eat," said White Shell Woman. "Our son will join you soon." Over the heads of the other men, she caught Sitting Bear's eye and jerked her chin a little to one side, in the direction of her own tipi. The boy must be over there getting dressed and painted.

The food was good. Sitting Bear and Eagle Plume had shot two buffaloes the day before, and the women had been roasting the tongues since early morning. If White Bear had not come to the tipi himself, the women would have been ready to invite him to a feast. They had made blood sausage, long strings of it, seasoned with sage and wild onions, packed into buffalo intestines, and then roasted in the coals. And, of course, there was always dried meat, pounded with chokecherries and sweetened with sugar. There was even boiled dried corn. The women had traded with the Pueblos for it the last time they had gone west to the Peace Spring.

Eating was serious business. The men filled their bowls when Sitting Bear invited them to, and waited while he prayed to the Sun and laid food at the edge of the tipi fire before they began to eat. No one spoke. They filled their bowls and emptied them. The food was good, and they were hungry. Talking could come later.

Halfway through the meal, Young Sitting Bear slipped into the tipi. His father nodded him to the last place on the women's side. The boy took up his own bowl, filled it, and ate as silently as the grown men. Packing Rocks, sitting next to him, was about three years older. He was the youngest Gourd Dancer.

When everyone had finished, the women returned to the tipi. There was still food left in the brass kettles and in the wooden bowls that had held the tongues. White Shell Woman refilled the visitors' bowls so they would have food to take home with them. No one had ever said that Sitting Bear was stingy or that his guests left his tipi hungry.

Now Sitting Bear filled and passed the pipe again, and they all smoked. Dinner was over, the smoke had blessed the food, and the time for ceremonies had come.

"Thank you for food," White Bear began. And the other Gourd Dancers chorused, "*Aho*! *Aho*!"

"We are glad you came and that you ate with us," Sitting Bear replied. "It's a good thing when friends sit and talk and share a meal."

"It's always a good thing to have friends and to bind them tightly to you," agreed White Bear. "That's why we're here. We've come to bind a friend to us today."

He rose, and the two pipe bearers rose with him. Frizzlehead joined them. Together, the four went around behind the seated men and out the tipi. Through the back-thrown flaps, Sitting Bear could see them circle the tipi the sacred four times, east to south to west to north, as the Kiowas always called the directions. At the end of the fourth round, White Bear and the others lined themselves up before the tipi door, facing outward. White Bear raised the pipe above his head in both his hands and prayed.

"Great Father Above," his prayer began. "You brought the Kiowa people out of a hollow log in the Time of Beginning of All Things. You have guided us and taught us, helped us and guarded us ever since. You give us our food, our father the buffalo. You keep away the owls and other night ghosts that could harm us. Now watch us again and guide us in what we may do.

"You see this young man sitting here. His father is my friend, and I want to keep him my friend. The Kiowa people have many enemies, and new ones are coming closer to them every day. Perhaps someday we may have to fight our new enemies. Then we must all stand together, like brothers, and shed our blood in the same place, as brothers do. We want to make this young man one of our brothers today.

"Great Father Above, guide and protect us all and make us strong against our enemies."

White Bear stopped speaking, and everyone sat in silence for a moment. Then first Sitting Bear, and after him the other men, said, "*Aho*! *Aho*!"

White Bear, with the pipe bearers and Frizzlehead, re-entered the tipi. They stopped before Young Sitting Bear. The boy glanced at his father, who motioned to him to stand up. He rose. His hands were held firmly behind his back. Sitting Bear, watching, remembered how hard it was for a youngster to hold them there until the right time came.

"Young Sitting Bear," White Bear proclaimed, "the Gourd Dancers have been watching you for a long time, ever since Sun Dance last summer. We see that you are a young man who knows how to behave

himself. We understand that you want to have the respect and the good words of all the people. For those reasons, we want you to be one of us. We are inviting you to join the Gourd Dancers."

Young Sitting Bear stood with his head bowed, his eyes politely resting on the ground, and his hands still joined behind him. "No, thank you," he answered White Bear. "I am afraid to take such a great honor. The Gourd Dancers are good men, but they mustn't think that everyone else is as good as they are. I don't deserve to be one of them."

"Good for the boy!" thought Sitting Bear. He almost said the words aloud. The family had gathered outside the tipi door, and Sitting Bear looked up in time to catch the eye of Eagle Plume, his oldest son. Though Eagle Plume was already married, and he and his brother were of an age, for one moment, Eagle Plume almost smiled. Sitting Bear did grin to himself. Eagle Plume must have been coaching the boy, probably while his mothers were dressing him in his fringed, yellow buckskin suit.

"We think we know a good man when we see one," White Bear reassured Young Sitting Bear. He held out the pipe himself, but Young Sitting Bear did not take it.

"I cannot touch that great pipe," he said. "I am only a boy, and that great pipe is for men."

The pipe bearers stood beside Young Sitting Bear, one at each hand, and White Bear and Frizzlehead faced him. From the place of honor, Sitting Bear watched, and Eagle Plume and his mothers looked on from outside the tipi.

"Come and be our brother," White Bear urged.

"I would like to be your brother, but the honor is too great." The pipe bearers took hold of his arms, just above the elbows. They had captured him.

"Perhaps you would feel more like joining us if you knew we had another new brother in mind," White Bear resumed. "If you will join us, you can be the one to take the pipe to Young Lone Wolf."

In spite of himself, Young Sitting Bear raised his head.

He almost let himself smile, but he managed not to. His father did smile, but no one was looking at him at that moment. Sitting Bear and Lone Wolf had named their sons with their own names. Some of

the old women had said that to give a child a living name was an unlucky thing to do, but the fathers had not cared. And, so far, no touch of bad luck had followed. The boys had grown up and played and danced together. They drove their families' horses to pasture in one herd. They had traded secrets and moccasins since they were babies, and there were no two healthier, stronger, smarter boys in all the Kiowa bands. White Bear did well to get them both and to get one by letting him invite the other.

"I will go with you to invite my brother-friend," said Young Sitting Bear, as he let the pipe bearers lift his hands and place them on the pipe. Now he could never turn back. Now he was a Gourd Dancer for as long as he lived, or as long as the other members wanted him with them. The pipe, given and taken, had sealed their brotherhood.

Frizzlehead unfastened the paint bag from his belt and painted the boy's face with the Gourd Dance signs. Straight Walking Woman came with her scissors, the ones she had traded four painted skins to a Mexican for, and she cut off Young Sitting Bear's hair above his right ear. Her sisters combed and braided the hair on the left side of his face. Now he could never again wear it hanging loose and free, in boys' fashion. He was dressed and painted as a member of a men's society. His hair was cut; in all outward ways, he was a man.

"Come here," his father said, and the young man obeyed. With his own hands, Sitting Bear separated four strands of hair from the big left braid and plaited a scalp lock.

He took the bear claw that hung around his neck and tied it to his son's scalp lock. "Keep it always," the father ordered. "You are named for the bear, now fight like the bear. Remember, the bear doesn't wait to be charged; he charges. He protects his woman and his cubs, the way that a man should. Your name means many other things. But when a man is young, he fights; he doesn't want to sit and think."

Young Sitting Bear looked at his father, but he did not answer in words. Instead, White Bear spoke for him.

"This is a great thing that we have seen," he announced. "We have seen a father give his own naming medicine to his son. This father got his medicine because once, when he was alone in the mountains, a bear charged at him. He stabbed it with his spear. But before the bear died, it sat down against a tree and faced him to sing its death song.

Sitting Bear knows that death song. Perhaps sometime the day will come for him to sing it. But he has given the fighting part of his name to his son, and we have heard him do it. Now the time has come when old men sit and think rather than fight."

The women grouped outside the tipi burst into the war whoop. The men inside sprang to their feet and shouted and stamped. Only the two Sitting Bears did not rise. The old man stayed where he was, and his son—his favorite son—knelt on the earth and faced him.

"All of you come with me," White Bear shouted. "Everyone come along to Lone Wolf's tipi while we ask our new brother to join us. Tonight we'll feast and dance. Everyone come along!"

"Go!" Sitting Bear ordered his son. "Go! Enjoy your youth. It will end soon enough!"

The boy rose and passed, in his turn, behind his father and out the door. Still in his place, Sitting Bear watched the Gourd Dancers file across the camp. His boy was walking by White Bear, hurrying to reach his friend.



# CHAPTER THREE

## *WOMEN'S WORK: 1869*

AUTUMN WAS THE TIME when the women were busiest. Once the winter campsite was selected, they went to work making everything snug and tight. Each woman set her tipi facing east, first putting up the four main poles and then filling the space between them with twenty lighter ones. Over the poles went the cover, cut and stitched from thirty or forty buffalo hides.

A lucky woman inherited her tipi poles from her mother. White Shell Woman had come by hers that way—old poles, worn smooth and silvery by time and weather. Straight Walking Woman, on the other hand, had new poles. She and Sitting Bear had made a trip to the north country not long after they were married. They took with them twenty good horses and twenty good mules bred from Mexican jacks, and when they came back, they had ten horses and ten mules, each dragging one fragrant, new, red tipi pole. The four main poles, stretched behind Straight Walking Woman's saddle horse, were trailing along the ground. The Shoshonis were sharp traders, but since they had the best tipi poles anywhere the poles were worth the price. The cedars grew tall and straight in the Shoshoni country.

White Shell Woman always used willows for her windbreak; she liked the smell of dried willow leaves. She drew a stick along the ground

around the tipi, about twice her arm's length out from it, and in the circle she set upright sharpened ground-willow poles as high as her head. She bound the willow poles together, lacing in and out with the long, thin withes of weeping willows, and then she thrust overlapping rows of willow branches, of either kind, through the lacings. When she finished, the windbreak made a solid wall around the tipi. The only opening was on the east, in front of the tipi door.

Straight Walking Woman preferred cottonwood thatching because she said it didn't smell at all and she could enjoy the perfume of her fire-warmed cedar tipi poles. Sometimes her sister-wives teased her; they said she did things differently from the way they did because she was so much younger and had taken up a lot of new ideas. But they all knew that wasn't really the reason. Straight Walking Woman came from a different band and had learned different customs. That was all.

The tipis were set in rows in the main camp, all facing the same way, east, downstream along the Tipi Pole River. The country was open and curved to the south, but the north side of the river was a bluff that made a windbreak for the whole camp during the winter storms. Between the camp and the open pastures, off to the southwest, were the latrine areas. Because the autumn wind blew most often from that direction, people were careful to bury what they left behind them and to pile heaps of sage all around.

West of the camp, in the honored area, were the sweathouses. There were five priests present in the camp: Sitting Bear, White Bear, Woman's Heart, White Horse, and Packing Rocks. Each guarded one of the ten medicine bundles, the Ten Grandmothers, who in their turn guarded the Kiowas. Each time a priest prayed to the bundle he cared for, beseeching it to care for all the people, he had to be clean within and without. So there were three permanent sweat lodges set on the slope up to the west, and two more for the visitors. Anyone else who wanted to take a sweat bath, for purification or healing, would go and put up a temporary lodge in the same area.

Now, in October, the winter camp was set up and everything was in order. Now the women could leave the work of making the camp clean and tight, and begin work on their accumulated rawhides.

In Sitting Bear's family, White Shell Woman began the work. She took a rolled hide from the place north of her tipi where the hides were

stacked up like the firewood piled on the south side, and carried the skin down to the Tipi Pole River. On the south bank, the water curved and lapped, running gently over pebbles, and there was a little, pebbly beach. White Shell Woman laid the hide in the shallow water and, with the point of her knife, drilled a hole in one leg. She pushed one end of an old, twisted rawhide cord through the hole, and fastened the other end around an elm tree, farther up the bank. Between middle-of-morning and midday, White Shell Woman had staked out the large hide.

White Shell Woman left the hide there to soak until it was soft. Then up on the bank she dragged the skin, limp, wringing wet, and smelling of stale meat and hot fur. Cloud Woman helped her carry the load to the south side of the camp, where the scrapings could be buried with the other rubbish. Here the women staked the hide out on the ground and went to work.

Hide-scraping was hard and heavy at best, but it was easier if two women worked together. White Shell Woman and Cloud Woman had worked together since they were little girls struggling with their first tiny antelope hides. They could work without looking at what they were doing; they could enjoy talking to each other while their bodies were busy. They bent forward, both hands grasping their heavy, iron-bladed, elk-antlered scrapers, their hair falling down over their faces and covering their shoulders as they swung and pulled, and dragged the fragments of flesh off the inner side of the hide.

"Why did Sitting Bear go to Edge of the Mountains with White Bear?" Cloud Woman asked. It was a rhetorical question, and they both knew it.

"White Bear invited him to ride along," was White Shell Woman's equally rhetorical reply.

"And he took both the boys," Cloud Woman persisted, her words coming with little bumps as she tugged at a tight corner of the hide.

"The trip will do them good. Ever since Eagle Plume got married, he's stuck around the camp like a regular old man," observed his mother. She slipped her blouse down over her shoulders and bound it around her waist. Out here, no one could really see them, and, even so, her long hair would hide her naked upper body. It was cooler working this way, and she had more room to swing her arms with the tool.

Cloud Woman glanced over and saw what her older sister had done, and slipped her blouse down, too.

"Well, it's a long way to go to get there," Cloud Woman resumed, when they were both working comfortably. "Even without any women or children, they can't make it in one night."

"They could, if they had to, I suppose," White Shell Woman said. "But why should they? The horses would just get worn out, poor things. It wouldn't do anybody any good."

"It's a nice time of year for travel," Cloud Woman said. "I always think autumn is the prettiest time, anyway. I like to be out riding when the noons are warm and the evenings cool."

"When this time of year comes, I remember our grandmother," agreed White Shell Woman. "My! That woman, she loved to ride better than anybody I've ever known. She always said it was because they didn't have horses when she was a little girl—just dogs to drag their things around. And when the men went down into Mexico and came back with the first horses, it was like seeing people grow wings. When she got her first horse and learned to ride, it was as if she had grown wings of her own. All those years on the ground, and then she could fly!" She smiled gently at the little girl who had become her own grandmother, and straightened up. "There!" White Shell Woman said. "I think this side is clean now. Let's turn it over."

Together they turned the hide from one surface to the other and began to scrape off the fur. "Sister," Cloud Woman asked, "do you need this fur for anything?"

"Why, no," White Shell Woman replied. "I don't think so. Do you need it?"

"Yes."

"Well, take it, then."

"I'll give you whatever you need," Cloud Woman offered.

"I don't think of anything. Yes, I know. I need some willow rods to make a new backrest. If you have some of those, I'll take a few."

"I've got plenty," Cloud Woman reassured her, and they resumed working on the skin.

"What do you want with the fur?" asked White Shell Woman.

"I need a new saddle pad. I thought that instead of just spreading a piece of tanned hide with the fur left on over my saddle, I'd make it

the way the Crows do—make a buckskin bag and stuff it with fur. I tried one when the Crows came visiting at Sun Dance last summer, and I liked it. It seemed to me it was more comfortable than our kind of saddle pad."

"Well, you're welcome to the fur," said her sister, "but don't blame me if you go back to an old, soft-tanned hide after all. Crow pads may pack down after they're used."

It took all day to finish cleaning the two surfaces of the hide. When dusk came, White Shell Woman left it staked out on the prairie. She went back to her tipi for a bucket of water, which she sprinkled over the skin. After a moment's thought, she pulled the stakes out of the ground and rolled up the hide. "It's still pretty warm at night," she remarked to her sister. "I guess I won't take any chances on having this dry out and get stiff before we can work on it tomorrow morning."

The next day was overcast and cloudy. Cloud Woman looked anxiously at the sky. "Do you think it'll rain before we finish?" she fussed.

"No, I don't believe it will," answered White Shell Woman. "This is a perfect day for tanning, if you ask me. The skin will hold the moisture and stay softer longer."

They took the hide down by the river where there was more moisture in the air, and each woman brought along a deer bladder filled with mashed liver and brains. The old saying was that any hide had brains enough to tan itself, but you couldn't count on having the brains and liver that went with the skin you were tanning.

Sometimes Sitting Bear or one of the boys asked for the brains to eat; sometimes the brains curdled before they could be dried and had to be thrown away. Sometimes a woman had a tanning bee, and then you had to take at least one brain with you to help her out. The liver worked just as well, and crushed dried liver and brains, soaked overnight in warm water to soften the compound, made the best tanning mixture of all.

The women spread the paste evenly and smoothly over the whole hide. Then they sat down, facing each other, and rolled the two edges of the hide into its center, and laid the bundle on their laps. With their feet outstretched before them, moccasin soles touching, the sisters stretched and pulled, bent forward and leaned back, working the

paste into the pores of the hide. Sometimes they paused to sprinkle on more warm water to keep the skin soft, but they never entirely stopped their pulling-and-kneading movement.

Today there was no talking. Working a big hide like that took all the time and attention they could give it, and they had no breath left for talking. Forward and back they swung, and their long black hair swung with them, clothing them modestly in place of the blouses they had laid aside.

Straight Walking Woman and Running Water, White Shell Woman's younger sister, came down at noon and fed them, slipping bites of dried meat into their mouths. They chewed in time with the pulling, laughed at themselves, and went on.

All the women worked steadily that fall. Straight Walking Woman and Running Water worked together on their hides, as White Shell Woman and Cloud Woman worked at theirs. The stacks of clean white skins under the willow beds in the tipis grew softer and thicker.

"Sometimes I feel as if something's going to happen," said White Shell Woman to Running Water as they looked at the stacks of hides. "I never tanned so many hides in one season before. We all seem to be getting ready for something."

"I don't know what it could be," Running Water said, looking out through the open tipi door. Suddenly she laughed. "Yes, I do know, too!" she exclaimed. "The men are coming in!" She ran out of the tipi, laughing and calling, and the other women ran from their tipis to hear the news. Off to the south, across the prairies, they could see men's lances and waving feathers and the heads of dancing horses.

They did not send scouts forward like a war party does. Instead, the men rode into camp quietly, for all their bright-colored trappings and their painted horses. Each man went to his home, and let his wife lead his horse away when he had slipped from its back.

Straight Walking Woman waited on the two Sitting Bears, and White Shell Woman and her two younger sisters went to Eagle Plume's tipi. His young wife was pregnant and could not touch his horse or his weapons, so his mothers took care of things for him.

"Was it a good trip?" White Shell Woman asked her son.

He nodded. "We rode it in one day," he said. "We went from here

to Edge of the Mountains with only one stop to eat, but we changed horses twice. They were all in good shape when we got there. Kicking Bird's got a big camp there on Stinking Water Creek."

"If you rode it in one day, why were you gone a month?" Cloud Woman demanded.

"Kicking Bird wanted us to talk to the white men. He said they had things to give us, and they wanted a talk. We waited around for that." He shrugged. "We didn't have much to do but smoke and talk and eat while we were waiting. My brother had a good time, but he's young. I worried about things here at home." He glanced sidewise at his wife. "I like to play hand-game one or two nights a month, but not night after night."

"Did you win?" asked Spring Leaf, his wife.

"I won some and lost some," said Eagle Plume, smiling. He unfastened a pouch at his belt and passed it over to her. "There's some new earrings and a pair of bracelets for you," he remarked. "That's about all I won, but I took them from Kicking Bird himself."

"Thank you," his wife said. She poked happily in the sack, taking out her new jewelry and trying it on, showing off how pretty she still looked with her baby less than a month away. White Shell Woman watched her, and laughed.

"Wait till the second or third one," she remarked. "Then you'll want him to bring home game; you won't care about jewelry."

"What about the white men?" Cloud Woman persisted.

"We talked to them. Most of them were soldiers, but there were two with straight black clothes, and the strangest things on their heads —straight up and down with a little lid spread out around the bottom, like an eyeshade! They listened most of the time; they didn't have much to say. But when one of them spoke, all the soldiers were quiet. Then the soldiers told us, in sign language, that one of those men would stay with Kicking Bird to teach the children in his camp. The other is going off to the Caddos to start to teach the children there."

"Teach them *what?*" demanded White Shell Woman. "We can teach our children. Kiowas always have."

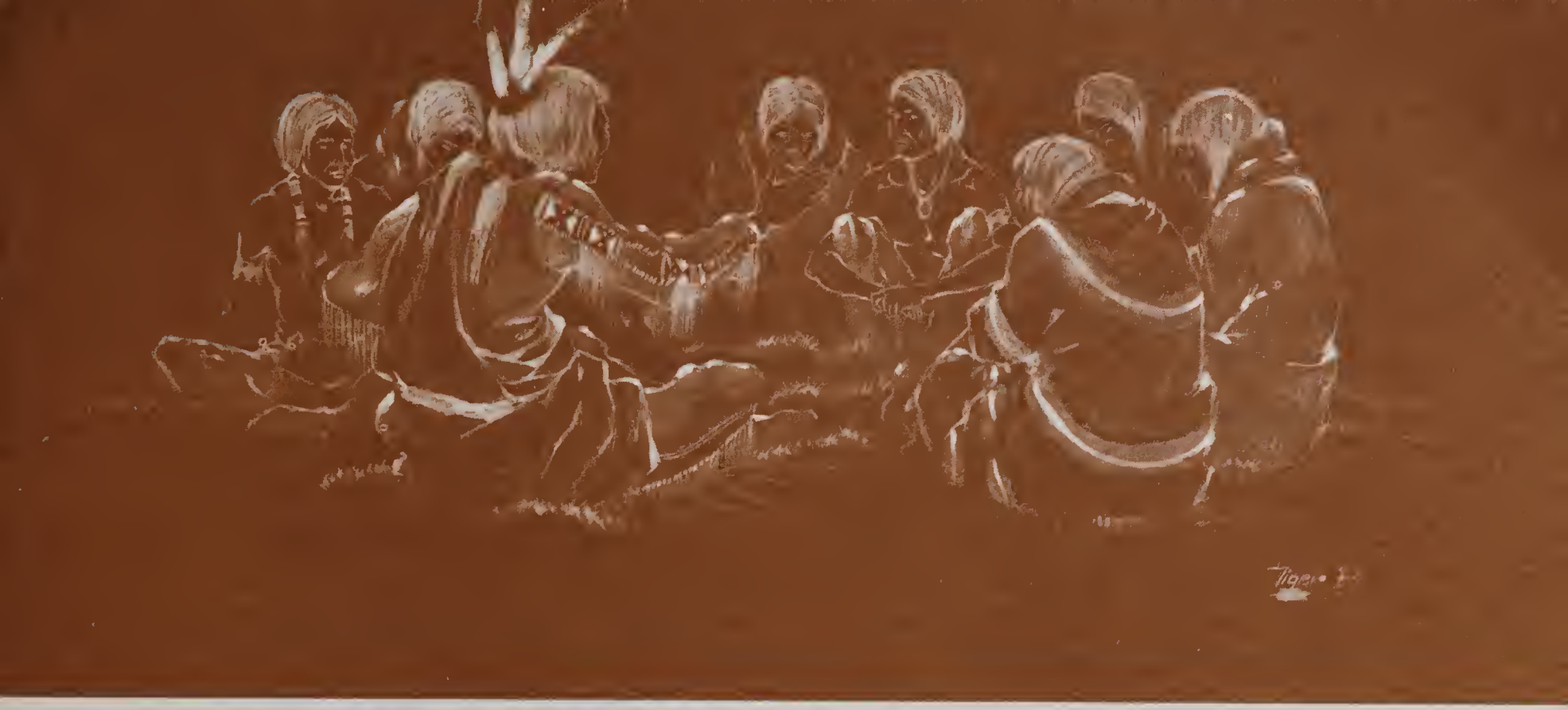
Her son hesitated. "I'm not sure," he said finally. "We had to talk through a Comanche interpreter, and maybe some things got twisted.

But if I understood them right, they are going to teach the children to talk like white people and to make and do the things that white people do."

"Why should they!" his mother snorted. "They don't need to know those things! They're Kiowas!"

"Some of the talk was with my father and White Bear and Kicking Bird," said Eagle Plume. "The rest of us weren't there. They'll have to explain to you what went on."

"I don't understand," Cloud Woman murmured. She rose. "Come, Sister. Let's leave our son here with his wife and go to our husband's tipi. Perhaps he has a word for us about what happened."



# CHAPTER FOUR

## *WATCHING FOR WOLVES: 1870*

THE WINTER WIND PACED through the camp. A month had gone by since Sitting Bear returned from Kicking Bird's camp, and the days were at their shortest. It was time to hunt wild turkeys, brushing them off the trees on windless nights. It was time to lace the tipi doors close against the prairie wolves. And it was time to keep a sharp watch on the camp at night. White soldiers might take advantage of the darkness and surprise the Kiowas as they had the Cheyennes.

It was a good camp and a happy camp. No one had been sick. No one had died that winter. The people had not once heard a woman wail in mourning; there had been no cut hair or fingers or clothes. Even the oldest people were well and strong.

At other times, winter camps were not so happy. Sometimes sickness walked the earth, coming from the east and going no one knew where to the west. Then the youngest and strongest people might lie burning with fever, coughing their lungs and their hearts out in the struggle to breathe. Then the oldest people would go out alone into the snow on the prairies, and stay there while they prayed to die and until death took them quietly, in snowy sleep. And those old people who were not strong enough to sacrifice themselves would beg their sons and daughters to take them out, so there would be fuel and fire for the younger ones who needed it.

Word had come that Little Bluff had died in his camp on the

Arrowhead River. The women of Sitting Bear's band wept for a good chief and a wise man, but not even Straight Walking Woman cut off her fingers or gashed her face for Little Bluff.

Sitting Bear's camp was safe from any curse of ghosts or owls; there were no witches in this band because Sitting Bear's power was strong enough to keep them away. Everyone was well, and everyone was happy.

In Straight Walking Woman's tipi, the fire was burning with a steady warmth. Sitting between her husband and the door, Straight Walking Woman was busy brushing her small daughter's hair. Singing Girl sat as still as she could, but from time to time she twisted around to watch her father and her older brothers. Eagle Boy, who was just a year older than she was, had already stretched out on his folded buffalo skin and had gone to sleep.

Sitting Bear took his pipe from his mouth and said,

"I have been thinking."

"What about?" asked his wife.

"I have been thinking that we have always been an honored family. We have cared for one of the Ten Grandmothers, and my father had an important place in the Sun Dance. Myself—I have never done anything to be ashamed of."

"Goodness, no!" Straight Walking Woman exclaimed. Her father, too, was a god-keeper. She knew what a good family stood for and what its duties were.

"We've never set up an honored son, though," Sitting Bear continued. "That's one thing we've never done. Now I think the time has come. We have plenty of horses, and our son has joined a dancing society."

Straight Walking Woman tipped her head ever so slightly toward Young Sitting Bear, and her husband nodded. Eagle Plume saw what they were thinking and smiled broadly.

"We'd better start planning now," he remarked. Eagle Plume was the oldest of the children, the son of the first wife. A favorite child was often a younger son. And Sitting Bear had never made any secret of his love for Straight Walking Woman's first boy. The son meant more to him because the three who were born after him had all died. Then there had been a long wait before Eagle Boy and Singing Girl came, almost chasing each other, and were kept alive by the nursing and care of the older wives.

"It's a lot of work," said Straight Walking Woman thoughtfully.

"You're thinking about making him a tipi of his own," Sitting Bear observed, watching her closely.

"Yes, I am," she answered. "When we were tanning buffalo hides this fall, I said to Running Water that it seemed as if we were getting ready for something. I guess we were."

"What about poles for his tipi?" asked Eagle Plume.

"I don't know," said his father's young wife. "We can't get north until after Sun Dance. I guess we'll have to trade around for them, one at a time, all over camp."

"I can get winter buckskins for a fringed shirt, if you will tan them," Eagle Plume offered.

"I can tan them! I know I can tan them!" exclaimed Singing Girl.

Her father laughed, and pulled the long braids which her mother had just tied securely. The new hair style had just come from the east, from the Caddos who lived near the white settlements. Braiding kept the child's hair neater than just letting it flow over her shoulders, but sometimes Sitting Bear thought the fashion was not so pretty. A woman's hair should be soft and loose. He was glad Straight Walking Woman was not wearing her own hair tightly plaited.

"You can help your mother," Sitting Bear assured the little girl.

"Now, what else?" wondered Straight Walking Woman. "I wish the Comanches would come in; they always have red paint and cloth from Mexico. I'll get Anko to paint him a buckskin robe to wear over his shoulders. Anko can draw your war deeds. And I can make his moccasins and leggings myself, if my sister-wives will help."

Sitting Bear smiled at her and bent forward in the firelight for a coal to put to his pipe. "There's more to this than clothes, you know," he said. "We'll have to have two feasts, one for the Gourd Dancers and one for the Crazy Dogs. We ought to invite the Bear Women to feast, too, because he is named for the bear. We can have a feast on each night of the Sun Dance."

Young Sitting Bear had been listening. The planning and the hard work would all go to honor him, to let people see how Sitting Bear loved and respected his son. Now the boy spoke.

"Father," he said, "I wish you wouldn't do this."

"Why not?" his father asked.

"Because I don't deserve it. Because I haven't done anything to

prove I have the right to this honor. I've been on two war parties, but I only went to hold the horses, and nobody captured anything much either time. Wait until I fight like a man and prove I have a right to be honored."

"Very young children are honored," Sitting Bear reminded him.

"If you had done this when I was very young, I would have felt differently. Then I would have had to live up to the honor all my life. As it is, I'm betwixt and between. I haven't proved myself, and I haven't been challenged."

"Let the honor challenge you," his father said. "We may yet need every fighting man the Kiowas can get. The whites are pushing in on us, and even when they don't come themselves, they push the other tribes against us. The Sauk and Fox are willing to fight us, and the Osages and the Pawnees are a danger all the time. Let this honor challenge you! Maybe then you can help us push our enemies back."

Young Sitting Bear sat thinking, his head bent, his eyes seeming to rest on the toes of his moccasins. "All right," he said after a little while. "All right. I'll let it be a challenge. If you make me a favored son, I'll take a war party out as soon as Sun Dance is over."

"Ah, no!" his mother cried, and for a while there was no other sound in the tipi.

"You could get killed," Sitting Bear reminded his namesake.

"That's the challenge." Young Sitting Bear turned to his brother. "I'm young," he said. "Most people would think I am too young to be a war leader, and perhaps I am. But if I take a war party out, will you go with me?"

"No," Eagle Plume answered. "People would say I was helping, that you were not doing it all yourself."

"My brother-friend, Young Lone Wolf will go. And when the word gets around, there will be others."

"It's a long time till summer, so you can make your plans carefully," Sitting Bear observed.

"It's a very short time till summer," Straight Walking Woman sighed in a whisper. Then raising her chin, she spoke in a voice that was steady and strong—as beautiful, thought Sitting Bear, as if it were singing. "With all that we'll have to do, we'll need each day's light," said Straight Walking Woman, determinedly. She patted her little

daughter on the shoulder. "Go on to bed, my child. It's late, and if you stay awake much longer, the owls will catch you."

"Let me stay up a little bit longer, Mother!"

"No, not a minute. How can you start tanning buckskins with me tomorrow if you don't get your sleep?"

"Just a little longer, just until Father tells me one story!"

Straight Walking Woman glanced at her husband, and he nodded.

"I'll tell her a short one," he promised.

They all laughed and settled back against their cushioned backrests. Young Sitting Bear pulled a piece of string from under his mattress and began to play cat's cradle with it, just as if he were a little boy.

This was the best moment of the day, and some of the best days of the year came in the winter. Then all the family was together, and the snakes were asleep. There was time for talking and planning and for telling stories. You could do little things, like make string figures that wouldn't mean anything but were fun to do.

"Saynday was coming along," Sitting Bear began, and all the family smiled. They had known those words since they were smaller than Singing Girl, and had never heard them without delight. "And as he came, he heard the dogs talking," Sitting Bear's voice continued.

They listened to the tale of Saynday's adventures as if the story were new. "The dogs were all talking at the same time, and none of them knew what the others were saying."

Singing Girl laughed at this, but her father shook his head at her.

"Some of them may have been saying very wise things," he reproved her. "Whatever they were saying, though, no one could tell one word from another.

"Now, Saynday loves to talk, and he had several things to say. He called to the dogs to be still and to listen to him, and then he called again. Four times he called them to come and listen, and then the big, old, yellow chief dog said to him,

" 'Saynday, you be quiet yourself. People are listening to you all the time. If we dogs feel like talking, well, then, we'll talk.'

" 'Hush and be quiet,' said Saynday. 'I have a lot of things I feel like telling you.'

" 'Go on away,' growled the old chief dog. 'Nobody wants to listen to you.'

" 'I've called you four times to listen,' Saynday said. 'Now I'm warning you. If all you dogs don't shut up, I'll do something to make you.'

"But the old, yellow chief dog turned his back on Saynday and went on talking to his friends. And they, in their turn, without listening to a word he said, talked right along.

" 'I'm warning you again,' said Saynday, and still the dogs went on talking.

" 'Third warning,' Saynday said. 'If you don't keep quiet and let me talk, you'll all be sorry.'

"But still the clamor went on; still the dogs talked; still Saynday held his ears shut against the noise.

" 'All right,' he said at last. 'I've asked you and I've warned you. Now I'm going to do something.'

"So Saynday took all his magic-power things out of the bag that hung at his belt, and he laid them out on the ground in front of him and went to work. He lighted his pipe and smoked magic tobacco. He waved his hands and made magic motions. He picked up his drum and beat on it in time to magic songs. And, last of all, he looked at the dogs, and they could feel his magic touching them.

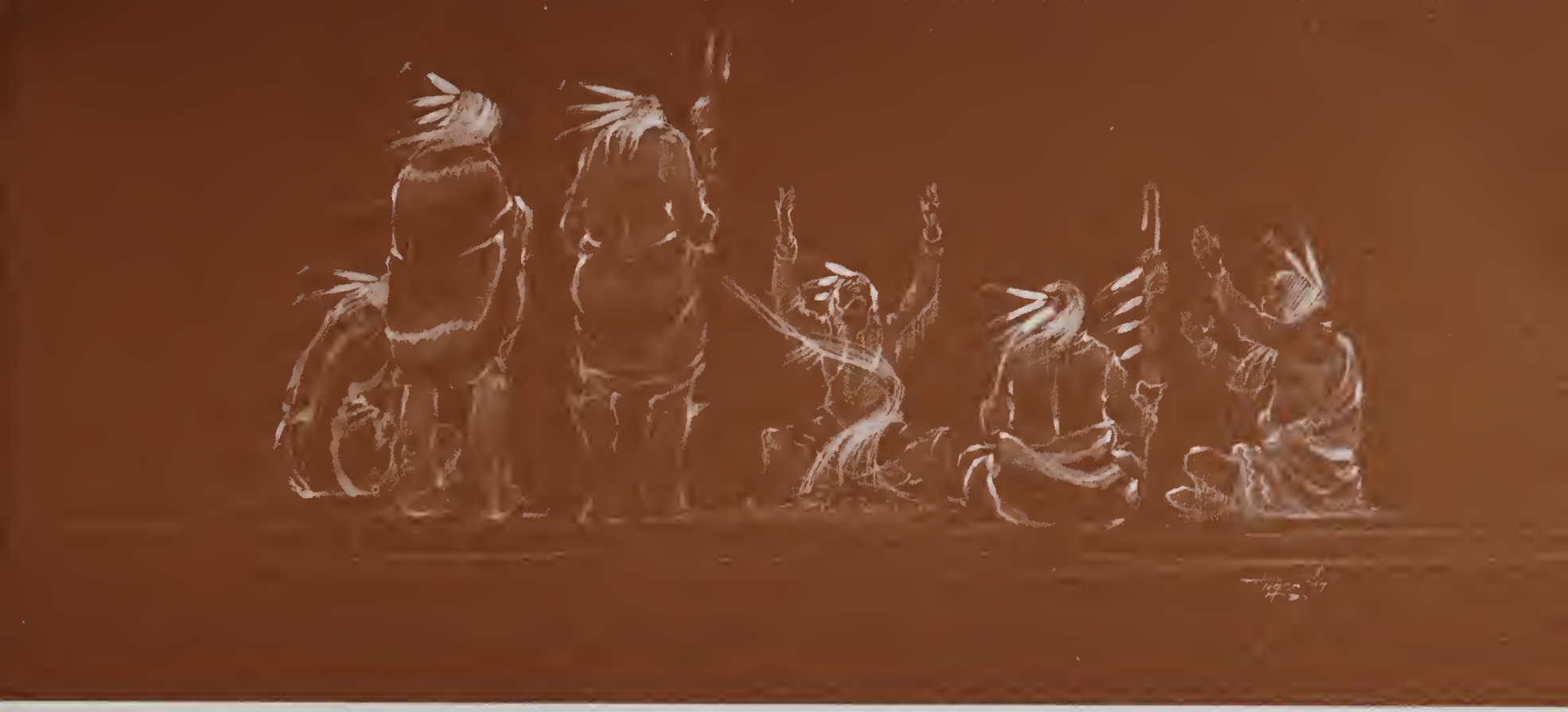
"Slowly and slowly the noise died away. Everything became silent. The dogs turned their heads from side to side and looked at each other. Their tongues were hushed and quiet. They could only speak with their eyes.

" 'Now,' said Saynday, 'let that be a lesson to everybody. When Saynday wants to talk, he wants to talk. And when he talks, nobody can interrupt him. From this time on, all you dogs will have to bark and growl, and turn your heads and talk with your eyes.'

"And that's the way it was, and that's the way it is, to this good day."*

By the time the story ended, Singing Girl was asleep in her mother's arms.

* This version of the story of "Saynday and the Talking Dogs" was told by Mrs. Margaret Hunt Tsoodle, Singing Girl's daughter.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## *PLANNING THE ATTACK: 1870*

IT WAS MARCH, and the wind blustered and bullied everybody. It carried sand from the river bed and dropped it in the kettles of food cooking over the fires. It ruffled the coats of the mares out at pasture, so they nudged their new-dropped colts aside and stood between them and the gusts. The March wind was hot or cold, wet or dry as it rushed across the prairies, but it was never still.

Neither was White Bear, Sitting Bear thought. White Bear and his band had come into camp the day before. They had sent their scouts ahead to ask permission to camp near Sitting Bear.

The camp had been quiet before. Men going hunting or boys driving the herds to pasture had come and gone without excitement or disturbance. Children, shouting with fun, threw snowballs at each other, or they took slabs of rib bones or rawhide to the bluff across the river to slide down on. But that was healthy noise. The adults would worry if they didn't make noise.

But with White Bear in camp, nothing was ever still. On their way to pasture, the horses broke away from the boys and stampeded. The men shouted aloud to each other as they got their weapons together. The calling back and forth was enough to scare the game into Texas. And around White Bear's tipi there was always a buzzing of movement like hornets around a broken nest. Only four families had fol-

lowed White Bear into camp, but suddenly the place was as crowded as at Sun Dance time.

The leftover winter grass was brown and dry, and near the camp it had all been grazed down. The herders had to take the horses far out, away from camp, to find feed for them. It was surprising that anybody would want to come to this place at this time of year, but White Bear had asked permission, and Sitting Bear had given it. He had directed the women to set White Bear's tipi, painted a solid red, next to his own. The red tipi, painted with running bears, had tripods set up beside and behind it to hold White Bear's war gear and his sacred possessions.

The first evening they sat in Sitting Bear's tipi and talked—about the weather and about the herds of buffaloes that should soon turn north again. They spoke of the stars and how they pointed to summer. They talked about their sons, and they even mentioned their daughters, but they kept away from the big thing that was in everybody's mind: What would they do to stop the white men?

This second evening it was White Bear's turn. His wives were preparing a feast for his friends; they had brought the supplies with them, and the women had been cooking all day. The air around the tipi was heavy with the smell of roasting dried meat and browning fat, and rich with the smells of sage and wild onions. Even Sitting Bear began to feel hungry.

He sat in Straight Walking Woman's tipi and thought about White Bear. That was a good man, but you had to know how to manage him. If White Bear went wild, he was like an unbroken horse; nobody could tell what he would do. White Bear was a great speaker; he was famous for his speaking. But he never planned what he was going to say; he just opened his mouth and let the words roll out. Then he sometimes said things he regretted afterward.

For himself, Sitting Bear seldom spoke in public, and when he did, he said very few words, but those words were well worth listening to. That was his power and his worth. He put his pipe back in its bag, reflecting that if everything went well and they had another meeting with the general this fall, he must arrange to talk more himself, before White Bear could get excited.

He heard the Gourd Dance caller start through the camp, shouting his message like a song.

"Sitting Bear! Big Tree! Woman's Heart! White Horse! Packing Rocks! Lone Wolf! You men all come to White Bear's camp. White Bear is putting up a feast for you, his friends. Sitting Bear! Big Tree! Woman's Heart! White Horse! Lone Wolf! Packing Rocks! Come to White Bear's camp!" He went through the camp, the shouted song rising and falling around him, until he had called each of the four men four times. With the fourth call, Sitting Bear got up and left his tipi.

At White Bear's tent, the flaps were thrown back on the red-painted outside curve. The door stood open, and Sitting Bear saw White Bear seated to the south of the honored place. Sitting Bear entered the tipi without stooping. White Bear gestured him to the place of honor, and Sitting Bear walked behind his host to reach it. When the others came in, White Bear motioned them to places along the north side.

The low fire in the center of the tipi was as welcome for its heat as for its light. Sometimes a puff of wind came against the smoke-flaps and a little smoke dropped down inside, but there was always a woman outside to adjust the flaps when this happened, and the light smell of pecan wood was pleasant, like wild balm perfume.

The men ate in silence after the women served them their food in wooden bowls. Each man had his own knife, and cut off what he wanted of the boiled or roasted meat; and then settled back to chew it slowly. There was salt, too. White Bear had got it from some Comanches who had been to Peace Spring and had traded with the Hopis for it.

When the meal was finished, when each man had a filled bowl on the ground before him, when White Bear's pipe was filled and ready to light, White Bear prayed. "Our Father Above," he began. "You see us sitting here. We are small, poor men, and we can do nothing unless You help us. We are the people who have always lived here. You know that. This land was ours a long time ago. Father Above, we want to keep our land."

He's getting worked up again, Sitting Bear thought. Well, let him. Maybe he can pray it out of his system, here and now.

"Now our land is threatened," White Bear continued. "The new people who are coming in are strangers to us and to our ways. They cut open the earth and put strange seeds in it. They build boxes to live in and string prickly wire around everywhere. They say they own the

land. Father Above, You know nobody can own the earth. He can only use it and the game and the plants that live on it."

That's true enough, Sitting Bear thought. But why does he have to go over and over the same old thing? We have all said this ourselves, and we have listened to each other say it. Perhaps it's time to stop talking and do something. But if White Bear has something in his mind, it'll come out pretty soon.

"So we ask Your help, Our Father," White Bear went on. "Stand behind us. We are going to set our spears to face our enemies and fight it out. We are going to get rid of these strangers, if we can. If not, they can kill us."

White Bear sat down abruptly. He took a coal from the fire to light his pipe, puffed smoke in the four directions, and then passed the pipe to Sitting Bear. He had left them no choice. By smoking with his friends in this way, White Bear had placed them where they must join him in whatever he did, whatever the risks to themselves.

Sitting Bear laid his hand on the pipe and held it without smoking. "Our Father Above," he said, with his eyes on the fire. "hear us. We are poor, pitiful people. We have only a few guns and not many men who can shoot them well. Our enemies are pushing us, but perhaps You will show us a way out. Perhaps You will teach us what to do so we won't have to fight. But we will fight if we are driven to fighting. Perhaps we can save our children and our women without battles. Teach us."

Sitting Bear puffed smoke in the four directions and passed the pipe to Lone Wolf. Lone Wolf did not take time to pray or even speak. He smoked, and the pipe went on to Big Tree, to White Horse, to Packing Rocks, and finally to Woman's Heart. Woman's Heart returned it to White Bear.

"Aren't you willing to fight?" White Bear asked.

"I don't want to fight around here because it could be bad for us," Sitting Bear answered. "If we are going to have to fight, I hope it will be farther away."

"That's good," Lone Wolf agreed. "We ought not to get them excited here because, with all those soldiers, we could get licked."

"Why not go south?" Big Tree asked. "There are a lot of white men there, and they fight hard."

"Why not go northeast?" inquired Woman's Heart. "They come from that way, too, and they push the Osages and the Pawnees against us. We can always fight those tribes. We don't have to fight the white men."

"There's no sense in fighting Osages and Pawnees," White Bear replied. "They are pushed by the whites, the way we are. You just said so yourself. No. Get at the cause. Nits breed lice. Fight the white men. Take their children and their women. Take their horses. Leave them with nothing. Go south, I say, go south! Wipe them out there! Then you can go another way!"

"Wherever our men go, they must go far," continued Sitting Bear. "South is good, I think. If the fighters don't get horses, they may get mules; they may get children and women; and if they go as far as Mexico, they can bring back sugar and silver. Go south, a long way south, away from our own country. I agree."

"Let that be the start of it. They can go out right after Sun Dance. They can go to Texas, and this time, besides taking horses and women and children, they can burn the houses and cut the fence wires. Why not let them count those things as war deeds?" White Bear suggested. They all stared at him. This was a new idea to everybody in the tipi.

"Why not?" asked Lone Wolf after a few breaths. "They could count burning a house the same as taking a horse or a woman."

"It's just as dangerous." Sitting Bear thought it over. "You really think it's a good idea?" he inquired.

White Bear was the host. He had put forward his first suggestion in his prayer, and Sitting Bear had countered it. The other men said nothing, taking no sides. White Bear and Sitting Bear must work it out. "We don't know yet if anyone wants to go," he said. "Our talk is in the air, like flycatchers darting around."

"Lone Wolf's son and mine plan to take a war party out this summer after Sun Dance," said Sitting Bear. "If we are to make new rules and count new war deeds, they should know it soon."

"I say, stick to the old way," Big Tree muttered. "Getting a man's bow or touching him while he's alive was all my grandfather counted, and it's all I've ever counted myself. Stick to the old ways."

"A man is alive," Sitting Bear reminded them. "A horse or a woman or a child is a living thing, too. If we start to count burning houses or

cutting fences, if we give credit for all those dead things, then scalping a dead man ought to count for as much as touching a live one." He sat back and waited, looking at his friends in the darting firelight.

They all nodded, and White Bear began again. "I know you are right," he said to Sitting Bear. "We shouldn't change the count, and we shouldn't talk about it outside this tipi. It isn't safe to talk! It isn't safe to think! I don't know how Kicking Bird finds things out, but somehow he does. If he discovers that the boys are planning a war party, he'll go straight to the general and tell him about it."

"Kicking Bird finds things out the same way the rest of us do," Sitting Bear said. "Every trader, every wandering white man, every young man out riding to see the country, every hunting party, and even the women and children gathering wild potatoes can carry news back and forth. If you don't want Kicking Bird to know something, don't think it." He paused a moment. "Above all, don't say it."

White Bear nodded wisely. "That's right. You must all keep quiet about this until the time comes for the war party to go," he said. "Nobody must talk about this raid until it's ready to start."

"We'll have to talk to the boys," Sitting Bear reminded him. "If they are going to make this raid for us, we must teach them as much as we can. Now isn't too soon to start training them." He looked at Lone Wolf, his friend. "You teach my boy, and I'll teach yours," Sitting Bear suggested.

"Good," replied Lone Wolf. "Then they will learn the most that we can teach them because they will learn from us both. It ought to be a good raid; they ought to cut a lot of wire. They might even bring back some horses!"

White Bear let the talk drift away from him into the plans for the Texas raid, and sat staring into the fire for most of the rest of the evening. Before his guests put out their pipes and went home, though, he spoke once more.

"Don't feel hard at me. I want this raid to succeed as much as you do. You said the boys were planning it before I got here, you know that. I don't want you to think I talked you into it."

Sitting Bear got up and drew his robe around him. "I don't want you to think you could," he said. "You are a great orator, a great speaker. We all know that. Sometimes we need a man who can talk because

these white people have double tongues, and there must be someone who can deal with them. But we must all—all of us—think a long time and hard before we say anything. And we must not say anything about this raid where others can hear us. Especially, we must make sure no word gets to Kicking Bird and, through him, to the soldiers."

Lone Wolf rose too. "My friend has said a good thing," he remarked. "Only by being careful of what we say, and to whom we say it, can our sons come back to us safely. If anything happens to them, let it happen because the Father Above had His reasons for it. Let it not happen because someone was careless and the word got around to the wrong ears."

"Well," said White Bear, "of course, we all feel that way." He looked around him. "Why should we risk our young men? It should be easy to keep the raid a secret. All we have to do is stay away from Kicking Bird and keep our mouths shut."

"That's all," said Sitting Bear. He and Lone Wolf said good night and left the tipi.

They stood together outside Sitting Bear's tipi for a few moments. The night was dark and only a few stars showed. The wind had made itself small and tried to hide in the grass roots, sometimes pushing out against their feet and sometimes seeming to stop altogether.

"If he can keep his mouth shut—" Sitting Bear said in a whisper.

"I know," Lone Wolf agreed. He nodded his head back and forth. "A brave man and a good fighter," he went on. "The greatest speaker among all the Kiowas. And a smart man, too. But, sometimes, when he talks, he forgets what he shouldn't say. It's always hard to be sure."

"I trust him," said Sitting Bear determinedly.

"We all trust him. We have to trust him. What shall we do if he wants to go with the young men?"

"He won't." Sitting Bear replied. "If he goes, he will have to go as my son's follower. White Bear wouldn't do that."

"No, I suppose he wouldn't," said Lone Wolf. "He took both boys into the the Gourd Dancers himself. No, he wouldn't go with their war party."

"No. Good night."

"Good night."



# CHAPTER SIX

## *THE CEREMONY AND DESCENT OF THE CURSE: 1870*

APRIL HAD COME, and the redbud trees were chasing the wild plums down the slopes of the Granite Mountains. Sitting Bear had broken up the winter camp, and the families had sifted out, spreading over the greening prairies, looking for deer and antelope and getting ready for the summer buffalo hunt that would come before Sun Dance.

Sitting Bear's own camp was on the north slope of Saddle Mountain, with its back to Cut Throat Gap. Here there was a spring, bursting out between two boulders and falling into a deep pool. The bottom of the pool was all brown pebbles from which water cress grew in thick clumps. The sharp, fresh taste of the greens was welcome after the heavy winter foods.

There were still two months left before Sun Dance and the war party's leaving. Part of the time could be spent in instructing the boys, but part should go into making them ceremonially safe. Sitting Bear sent Eagle Plume out to ride to the camps within a day's range to call in the Eagle Shields from the other bands.

Six men belonged to the society. They changed their names for the meetings and did not use their everyday ones. Sitting Bear alone was known by his own name; it was his, and he belonged to it. No one could think of him as anyone but Sitting Bear.

He did not put up the bear tipi for this ceremony. Instead, Straight Walking Woman and her sister-wives raised a new white buffalo-hide tipi, with the green eagle of the Eagle Shields painted on its back. Behind the tipi, the women set six tripods, all made of *bois d'arc*, which was the strongest and toughest wood that the Kiowas knew. From each tripod was hung a man's shield, with bow and arrows in their cases, and a knife sheath painted green. The women set out a feast inside the tipi and called the members of the society to eat. Then they went away to the other end of the camp.

Before he entered the tipi, each man went to his tripod. Three times he reached for his knife before he took it in his hand. At the tipi door, he paused. Three times he attempted to step over its threshold before he entered on the fourth step. And then he waited just inside the tipi door, waited until Sitting Bear invited him for the fourth time to sit down.

They smoked themselves from the cedar fire on the ground to the west of the regular fireplace, wafting the incense along their arms from hands to hearts, along their legs from feet to loins, and over their faces and down to their hearts. With silent prayers they did this and waited for Sitting Bear to move.

When they were all ready, purified and cleansed with the healing smoke, Sitting Bear drew his knife from its sheath, on his fourth attempt. It seemed as if the power of the knife was so strong that the knife clung to the case until he coaxed it out with gentle motions. The others imitated him. They all passed their magic knives four times through the cedar smoke. Then Sitting Bear held his knife, point down, above his mouth. After three gulps, he swallowed it. All the other Eagle Shield members did the same thing.

Still without speaking, they purified themselves again with smoke. Then Sitting Bear coughed four times and drew an eagle feather from his throat. All the others repeated his actions. They laid the feathers across the sheaths that had held the knives, and Sitting Bear began to pray.

"Our Father Above," he said, "you see that our hearts are pure. We have come through the first part of our ceremony without mistake and without harm. Now we will feast, and then will come the second part. Father Above, we dedicate this ceremony to the safety of our sons. Be

with them and watch over them in everything they do. Give them Your power and bring them safely home to us. Care for our sons, Father."

He stopped speaking and motioned to his friends to eat. Sitting Bear served the others himself, and only when they had finished did he eat his own meal. Because he was the greatest among them, he was their servant.

When he had finished eating, Sitting Bear dug a hole in the tipi floor beside the fireplace and buried what little food was left. He passed the pipe around, and he and his friends smoked together.

"I called you in to ask you to help me," Sitting Bear finally said. "My friend's son and mine are going to take a war party out after Sun Dance. They are going south to fight the Texans and maybe the Mexicans. By going through this ceremony of the sacred knife with me, you are adding your prayers to mine to help bring the boys back safely. So far everything has gone just right. No one has dropped his knife in the fire or even on the earth. You have all eaten well and smoked with pure hearts, or the fire would have flared up to show which one of us was a liar. Now, before we end our ceremony and close the tipi, pray with me."

He rose and, with his magic feather in his hand, he stood at the head of the tipi. "I have made a new song," Sitting Bear said. "A fighting song. It is a song that has come to me from the bear I killed. We are not a war society, so we cannot keep this song for ourselves; but I shall teach it to our sons so they can take it on the journey with them, and then I shall give it to the Crazy Dogs. Listen to me first, and then sing it with me:

*I live, but I will not live forever.*
*Mysterious moon, you only remain,*
*Powerful sun, you alone remain,*
*Wonderful earth, you remain forever.*
*All of us soldiers must die.**

The members of the Eagle Shield Society listened while Sitting Bear sang his war song through four times. Then, one at a time beginning on the south side of the door, they began to sing it, too. It was a good song; it would be a good song to ride to. And the Eagle Shields swayed their bodies, as if they were already riding against the enemy, while they sang Sitting Bear's war song.

Afterward, because they felt like singing, they sang more songs. They sang one about how the Kiowas charged a Ute camp and how the Utes were scared and ran. They sang another one about how an owl flew over a Kiowa war camp and dropped a Navaho's eye in the cooking fire. And they wound up singing the "Journey Song:"

*Going away on a journey,*
*That's the thing to do.*
*That's the best way for a young man*
*To make himself rich and famous!**

At the end of the singing, Sitting Bear stood up in the firelight. "My friends, I thank you," he said. "*Aho!*" They all nodded and said, "*Haw!*" Sitting Bear went on, "Now, let us close our ceremony."

He dropped dried, powdered cedar on the fire and jumped back as it flared up angrily. Nobody said anything, but all the men looked at each other. A sacred fire should burn with a small, steady flame, not with this sudden burst and blaze.

After a moment, Sitting Bear gathered himself together. He laid his magic feather across his knife sheath, picked up his pipe, and began to pray. "Father Above, pity us. Look on us mercifully. You know our hearts are good, and we want our sons to be safe. Bring them back to us, Father, and let them succeed in their war party." He reached for a coal from the fire, and the hand that held the fire stick shook just a little, like an old man's. Sitting Bear held his hand steady while he drew four breaths, and when he lighted his pipe, there was no trembling left.

The men smoked with Sitting Bear and sat with their heads bowed, praying, as they passed the pipe. Sitting Bear tapped out the bowl and buried the ashes. And then he took up his feather.

Four times he motioned to his mouth, and the other Eagle Shields imitated him. Four times he put the feather's tip against his tongue and then, at last, he swallowed it.

Now the others did what Sitting Bear had done, and when all the feathers had disappeared and only the empty knife sheaths showed,

* The translations of these two songs were furnished by Mrs. Ioleta Hunt MacElhaney, a daughter of Singing Girl. Both songs have been published by me before, in *The Ten Grandmothers* and in *The Black Stone Knife*.

Sitting Bear coughed four times again. His magic knife was in his hand, with its point turned down toward the ground.

How it happened, no one was ever sure. Sitting Bear was holding the knife and bending toward the fire to draw the cedar smoke toward him. And then the sacred knife was standing there before them, the point down in the gound. The flames were surrounding it where he had dropped it. At once, all saw it, and at once they all cried out. The greatest power of the Eagle Shields had been broken. The point of a magic knife had touched the ground and had buried itself in the fire.

Sitting Bear did not cry out like the others. He hardly felt the heat of the flames as he bent forward and purified himself with cedar smoke. He reached three times for the knife handle and, on the fourth time, he grasped it and pulled the knife up. He sheathed it and fastened the sheath to his belt.

"Father Above," Sitting Bear said very quietly. "let no harm come to my friends. Let no one hurt our sons. Only to me, Father, only to me. Keep them safe wherever they go and in whatever they do. Let whatever comes, come to me."

When they filed out and left him, Sitting Bear sat alone at the head of the tipi, looking like a man waiting to be buried.



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## *A WHITE MAN IN CAMP: 1870*

SITTING BEAR HIMSELF MADE his son's war arrows. It was not his practice; he seldom made his own arrows, and he had never before made any for another person. But during the winter, after the war party was decided on, he had searched up and down the river and its tributary creeks for straight dogwood limbs that could be scraped and smoothed for shafts.

From his supply, which was packed in a rawhide sack, Sitting Bear selected black metal scraps to scrape and shape for the points. He had gathered the metal from wherever wagon trains had passed, hoarding it piece by piece. Some of the iron was as soft as silver to hammer, but the best points came from the thin, tough, whitish-metal knife points and blades that the white men sometimes dropped. Some traders from Mexico even carried ready-made metal arrow points in their loads, sharpened and with the stem ends notched to set into shafts.

Sitting Bear had none of the whitish metal among his supplies. Nobody else in camp had any either. He decided that he would go south to Kicking Bird's camp and see if a trader had visited there lately. The word last fall had been that a trader planned to set up a house near the soldier house on Stinking Water Creek, but even if that were just gossip, someone might have come peddling through the country.

You couldn't trust Kicking Bird; he spoke with a forked tongue. One day he was honey to the soldiers; the next day he was trying to persuade the other Kiowas to make war with the enemy. Always Kicking Bird was as smooth as the back of a well-groomed horse. Everybody's friend, nobody's enemy, and nobody's confidant was Kicking Bird. The man came from an ordinary family, and his mother and one grandfather had been captives, so in turning toward the whites he might be thought to be turning toward his own blood. But there were other descendants of captives among the Kiowas who did not act in this way. They were Kiowa through and through.

Because he needed a friend who would stand by him on this trip, Sitting Bear chose White Shell Woman as the wife to go with him. They had ridden many rivers together, and they had little need for talk between them at any time. White Shell Woman was a good trader, too, and she talked to everyone with a clear straight tongue.

May was a month for riding, anyway. The ground over which they traveled, making the east turn around the end of Saddle Mountain, was many-colored with the little flowers that shot up from it, as many-colored as beadwork. There were tiny blue stars on stems like grass, and larger pink stars on stronger stems. The blue and cream bunches of lupine blossoms spilled like clustered grapes along the ground—poison to horses if eaten, but beautiful to look at. And the spears of the yuccas were shooting up, all with white bells strung along their handles. Morning and evening the air was cool; at noontime it was hot enough to make the shade of the pecans and cottonwoods comfortable. The little breeze barely lifted the fringes of White Shell Woman's old brown buckskin dress.

Once in a while she spoke; "This is a good place for a nooning," Or, "Why not sleep here, where the fire will warm the rock face? Then we will have heat on both sides till morning."

They took two days for the trip, though both of them could remember the time when they thought nothing of riding that trail in one. There was no hurry. Kicking Bird, if he was not where he had camped all winter, would not be far away. He was getting as settled as any other Wichita. Pretty soon he would have the women planting gardens and corn and melon patches. Sitting Bear grinned, and his wife saw him.

"What's the joke?" she asked.

"I was thinking. Kicking Bird has got his band staying in one place almost year round now. Pretty soon he'll have gardens and grass huts, like the rest of the Wichitas."

White Shell Woman smiled. "It might be a good idea. We might come to it ourselves. Every year there seem to be fewer buffaloes, and the men go farther for them."

"I don't know where the buffaloes are going," Sitting Bear pondered. "There should be plenty, but they seem to be melting away."

"It's as if they were going back into the earth," said White Shell Woman. "Saynday brought them out of a hole in the ground. Perhaps he is taking them back." She laughed a little. "*Daw Saynday*m!" she said, shaking her finger at the sky. "Give us back our buffaloes! All the children will be hungry if you don't."

"Saynday can't hear you now," Sitting Bear laughed. "He's gone to the stars for the summer, remember?"

"And if we go on talking about him, he'll cut off our noses," agreed White Shell Woman. "Gardens are all right," she went on. "If you have a garden, you have food for the children in winter, buffaloes or no buffaloes. I wonder why the Kiowas never gardened?"

Sitting Bear dropped his voice. "I think they did, once," he observed. "In the story of the Twin War Gods and how the Ten Grandmothers' bundles came to be, do you remember where the Spider Grandmother found the Son of the Sun when he was an orphan baby?"

"In her corn patch!" White Shell Woman exclaimed. "I never thought about that! Perhaps they did, perhaps the Kiowas were farmers once—a long time ago."

"Perhaps," Sitting Bear said, "though it must have been a long time ago. It must have been before they had horses. There's nothing to show that any Kiowa ever wanted a garden after he could ride and hunt."

"My grandmother could remember the first horses they got from the south, and how they rode out from the Black Shiny Hills, south and east, to the headwaters of Arrowhead River. Even when she was an old, old woman, she still bred those special big yellow dogs that they used to draw the tipi poles and equipment. Kiowas hadn't very many horses then, and those that they had were too sacred to be used to pull loads."

"It has been a long time, hasn't it?" asked Sitting Bear. "People

forget their old ways quickly. Our children have forgotten about the drag dogs and how the women bred them as men breed horses now."

"But the women still find a place in their tipis for their dogs," White Shell Woman said with a smile.

They came over a smooth, south-tilting roll of the prairie and saw the line of trees that marked the course of the creek below them. The cottonwoods were a paler green than they would be later in the summer, but the elms had already taken on their darkest shade. The tipis were almost hidden in the pools of the shadows, but here and there the bare sticks of tipi poles showed through the green, like reminders of winter. They could smell the scents of the smoke and the cooking carried to them on the little breeze that blew up from the creek.

"We're just in time, I think," said Sitting Bear, and they cantered their horses down the last easy slope and into Kicking Bird's camp.

At once people boiled out to welcome them. This band camped farther south than the other Kiowas. In the past, band members had taken many Mexican and Texan captives, and they still intermarried with the Wichitas. All the same, they called themselves the True Kiowa Band. Their color and build were different from the northern Kiowas: they were smaller, and some of the children were very fair although others were dark. It was a clean camp, but even the smell of cooking food did not cover the odors of long use and of living in one place.

Kicking Bird was a short man with a wide, pointed face. He always looked as if someone had surprised him a little and he was trying not to show it. Perhaps it was the way his eyebrows grew in points over his eyes, as if he had just raised them. He held out his hand, and Sitting Bear shook it. "Get down," said Kicking Bird.

Sitting Bear and his wife dismounted, and two of Kicking Bird's sons led the horses away. Kicking Bird motioned his guest into the big brush arbor that stood in front of his tipi. The arbor, open to north and south, caught every cool wandering summer wind.

"Sit down and eat with us," he said.

"Thank you," Sitting Bear replied.

Kicking Bird sent one of his wives for water, and the visitors drank and splashed freshness on their hands and faces. The taste and smell of sulphur flavored the water, but now it was not too strong to be sicken-

ing. Later in the summer, as the creek dried up, the water would become distasteful to anyone who was not used to it.

The women began to bring out food and to set it on the floor of the arbor. One of them called a child and sent him on an errand. Sitting Bear's eyes idly followed the child as he ran through the camp; then he sat up with a jerk. Over on the east edge of the camp stood a straight-sided tent—a white man's tent. The child ran to the tent, but before he got there, a man emerged from the tent. He was a white man, as his clothes plainly showed. The man came across the camp with the little boy.

As the white man drew closer, Sitting Bear saw that his clothing was dark and plain. There were no gold buttons on it, nor any of the other shiny trimmings that the soldiers wore. The man's hat was straight up-and-down and black, and sat squarely on the top of his head, so that its wide brim shaded his shoulders all around.

"Who is that?" Sitting Bear asked.

"His name is Tamma. He comes from far away." Kicking Bird rose to meet the man and to lead him into the arbor. He said something, and the man nodded and extended his hand in grave greeting to Sitting Bear. After a moment, Sitting Bear took his hand. Once before, Sitting Bear had encountered this man.

"What is this man doing here?" he demanded, not letting the way he felt show in his face or his voice.

"He came to teach the children. There is a White Father in the East*, they say. Because he cares for his Indian children, he sends men like this one to live in the camps and teach the children. He is teaching me, too," Kicking Bird added, almost as an afterthought. He motioned to them. "Eat all you want," Kicking Bird went on. "Prove to me that you feel as welcome as you are in my heart." The white man bowed his head, and his lips moved in prayer for a moment. They all waited until he had finished.

* Woossinton: The universal Indian word for Washington, implying not only the city proper, but also the Bureau of Indian Affairs, its policies, etc. The word is still in common (all too common) use. I have added it to clarify the difference between the Great Father Above and the White Father in the East (Woossinton).

With the meat, the women brought boiled dry corn and dried buffalo berries which they had made into a sauce by adding flour for thickness and sugar for sweetness. There was bread, made by twisting the dough around a stick and leaning it near the fire to bake, so that it wouldn't burn or get ashes on it. The white man seemed to like the bread, and he thanked Kicking Bird's youngest wife for it.

After dinner, Kicking Bird and Sitting Bear smoked. The white man shook his head and held up his hand, palm out, to refuse the pipe which Sitting Bear offered him. If he had not been in another man's camp, Sitting Bear, in his anger, would have struck the white man. No one had ever refused to smoke with him before.

"Why doesn't he smoke?" Sitting Bear demanded.

"It's against his power," Kicking Bird replied soothingly.

"But how can you have a man in camp who doesn't smoke with you? How can you trust him? Believe him?"

"He is a good man," Kicking Bird responded stubbornly. "Tamma has been here all winter, and we know that he is a good man."

"You say that his name is Tamma and that he comes from far away. You say this White Father in the East—I never heard of him before, either—wants to help his Indian children. Why don't they start helping the Indians east of us? How did they find out about the Kiowas? Why does this Tamma have to come around here, bothering us? And if he wants to be our friend, why won't he smoke with us? Our other friends do."

Kicking Bird had an answer ready. "He went to Red Rock Standing, where the Caddos and the Wichitas are and where the government men who are not soldiers stay, and he lived with those tribes. He started a school there for the Indian children. And then the Caddos told him about the Kiowas and how the Kiowas had no farms, but only horses and buffaloes. Tamma kept thinking, thinking in his heart about the Kiowas. Finally his power moved him, and he came here to teach us another way of living."

"To teach *our* women to farm?"

"To teach all of us, men and women, to work with our hands and to take our living from our mother, the earth."

"Men care for horses. Men hunt. Men fight. *You* can let your women farm, if you want them to. But when the time comes that my

women want corn fields, I will get them Mexican captives to do such work."

Tamma put out his hand and spoke in his own language to Kicking Bird. Kicking Bird listened and nodded and turned to Sitting Bear. "He says a time is coming when no one will be able to hunt. Already the buffaloes are being killed off in the north country."

"I know that. The more for us."

"They are being killed off there because the white men are building an iron road—I don't know what that is, but it will stretch across the whole country from east to west. Because the buffaloes pull up the road and spoil it, the white men are killing off the buffaloes. Soon there will be other iron roads, maybe one through here. Soon there will be no more buffaloes. Then the Indians may starve."

Sitting Bear's hands were shaking with his anger, and he had to hold himself still until they were steady again. Then he spoke quietly, "Perhaps these things will happen. I don't think they will. Indians can fight, and they have always fought. But I will tell you this, and I will tell your friend. When the time comes that I must stop fighting for my land and my people, I will be dead. Before I will let them fence me in, I will die." He stared at Kicking Bird as if he could not believe what he saw.

"You are not afraid to live fenced in," Sitting Bear said wonderingly. "You will let him teach your children, and you will learn his ways yourself, and you are not afraid. I—I will die first. Tell him."

Kicking Bird translated. Tamma listened, sitting with his head bowed. Then he stood up and bowed to all of them. He left Kicking Bird's camp and returned to his own tent.*

Sitting Bear sat on, with his head bowed, after Tamma had left.

"Why did you come this way?" Kicking Bird asked as he put his hand on his pipe. Sitting Bear answered before the pipe could be filled or lighted.

"We heard there is a white man down near the soldier camp who has things to sell. My wives want some red-and-blue cloth and some little bells. My sons said they would like some knives."

* This account, from Indian sources, is substantially the same as that given by the Quaker missionary, Thomas C. Battey, in his *The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians.*

Now he could never tell Kicking Bird the real reason why they had come. Kicking Bird would know why he wanted metal arrow points. It would have to mean a war party at this time of year. Kicking Bird would tell Tamma, and Tamma would tell the soldiers, and the young men would be stopped before they started. And he himself, Sitting Bear, would be the one who had given it away. No Kiowa could trust Kicking Bird with anything. Kicking Bird was on the side of the white men.

"Yes, there is a man-who-trades," Kicking Bird agreed. "He built himself a wooden house, and it is full of things. I'll ride there with you tomorrow."

Sitting Bear almost hesitated, then he agreed. He must not let Kicking Bird see him buy arrow points, but arrow points he must have. Well, White Shell Woman could trade for them; she was good at it. And while she dealt with the trader, he could try to keep Kicking Bird busy on the other side of the place. After they had gone to bed, he told his wife what he wanted, and White Shell Woman agreed to do what Sitting Bear said.

They all rode to the post the next morning. It wasn't far. The sky was a high, far-off blue, and a blanket of colored flowers spread around the horses' feet. They crossed Stinking Water Creek and went through a dense grove of big pecan trees; through the young leaves, greeny-white blossoms sprinkled down on them like a light rain. On the far side of the grove, one pecan tree, older and bigger and heavier with blossoms than any of the others, stood alone against the horizon. Between it and the grove was a square stone wall which held in a herd of horses, and beyond it, up the slope of the hill to the west, was a funny square wooden building. Cresting the hill were more square stone structures.*

The door of the store was open, so they dropped the lines over their horses' necks and got down. There was no one in sight, but a breath later a man came to the door of the store and looked at them. He spoke to Kicking Bird in Comanche, and Kicking Bird answered in the same language.

* These structures are the stone corral and barracks square at Fort Sill. Most of them are now a museum complex.

All the Indians on the Southern Plains spoke Comanche, just as they used sign language with members of other tribes. Sitting Bear, as a guest in Kicking Bird's camp, could not speak directly to the trader, and it was good manners for Kicking Bird to act as his guest's spokesman.

"Do you understand?" Kicking Bird asked Sitting Bear.

"I learned Comanche when I was a boy myself," Sitting Bear returned, and now he spoke straight to the man. "My wife and I have come to trade," he said. "We heard that you have red-and-blue cloth and bells and some other things."

"Both those things and more," the man answered. His face was red, and his white shirt made it look redder. He pushed the door open wider with one big red hand. The hair on his head, and even that on his hand, was red. "Come in and look around. See for yourselves what I have," he invited them.

Kicking Bird led the way, and Sitting Bear followed him. Then came White Shell Woman with the bundle of dressed hides they had brought to trade. Kicking Bird acted as if there were nothing special to see, but Sitting Bear and White Shell Woman stood just inside the door and stared around them. They had never seen anything like this before.

From the dirt floor to the raftered ceiling, the walls were covered with things. On one side were shelves with cloth and beads and tin cans with pictures on them. On the other side hung saddles, saddle blankets, knives and tools, and hardware that Sitting Bear could not even imagine uses for. And in the center of the wall stood a rack of guns. A chain went through the guards of the guns, and a great metal lock hung down in front of them.

"Does he sell guns?" Sitting Bear demanded instantly. Kicking Bird nodded.

"Guns and gunpowder and bullets," Kicking Bird assured him. "The ones he sells are better than those the soldiers have."

"Why doesn't he sell these to the soldiers then?"

"The soldiers don't have to buy their guns. The White Father in the East gives them guns."

"But you said these were better. Would he sell me a gun?"

"He will sell a gun to anybody who wants it and can pay for it."

"Ask him how much."

While Kicking Bird and the trader were talking, Sitting Bear thought and did not listen to them. He had come for arrow points, but a gun would be much better. Sometimes the Comancheros brought guns with them, but usually those weapons were old and rusty and no good to begin with.* Some blew up in the faces of their Indian owners and killed them. Or, if they brought good guns, the traders were out of ammunition before they reached the Kiowas. Never before had Sitting Bear had a chance to buy both at the same time, and with the assurance that both would be good. Here, on the edge of his own country, was a place where he could go to buy a gun and some bullets any time he wanted to. It was worth-while keeping on good terms with Kicking Bird just to be able to come here in peace. Perhaps, later on, the trader might be persuaded to come as far as Saddle Mountain and visit Sitting Bear's camp. Kicking Bird spoke, and Sitting Bear brought his mind back to the place where he stood.

"He says he wants eight prime hides for the gun and a hundred rounds of ammunition," Kicking Bird reported.

"That's a lot. I have only twelve skins here. What does he want for the knives?"

"Four skins apiece."

"That's too much," said Sitting Bear. And he turned to the door as if he were going to walk away. Sometimes that worked with the traders who came to the camps.

"Two skins apiece," said Kicking Bird quickly.

"Would you have gotten the other two if I had taken the first trade?"

Kicking Bird was embarrassed. "Usually he gives me a little something when I bring him customers. It's been a long winter, and I've been too busy to hunt much. So I need whatever little things I can find when I run across them."

"Tell him to give you some little things of his own, not of mine," said Sitting Bear calmly. "Do you mind?" he asked White Shell Woman.

* Comancheros were traders from Mexico who came first to the Comanches and then to the other Indians.

"No," she replied. "I have something of my own I may be able to trade for the cloth." She left the skins on the floor and went out.

Sitting Bear turned to the trader and held out his hand.

"Let me see the guns, please," he said in Comanche.

The trader passed one to him. "Springfield Seventy," he said, and both the Kiowas repeated the English words after him.

Sitting Bear balanced the gun across his open palms and held it steady for a moment before he raised it to his shoulder. The gun sat sweetly in either position; it was good in the hand. Sitting Bear nodded.

"This one," he said to the trader.

"It's good," the trader agreed. "It's a new model. They say that next year the troops will have them, but I don't know. Some of the buffalo hunters up north are using them, and they say these bring down as much game as their bigger guns."

"Springfield Seventy." Sitting Bear repeated the words. He looked around for his wife. White Shell Woman had come back; she was standing at the other end of the counter opening a cloth bundle. From it, she took two pairs of beaded moccasins and a beaded knife case. They were her own, her best things, and she could do what she liked with them.

It took much longer for White Shell Woman to buy two pieces of cloth and a bunch of bells than it did for Sitting Bear to make up his mind about a rifle and a hundred rounds of ammunition. She felt the fabric, held it up and draped it over her arm, measured it against her shoulder, and stroked its sleekness. At last Sitting Bear grew impatient.

"Come on," he said. "Hurry up. You know you're going to buy it. So why do you take so much time doing it?"

"I like to," White Shell Woman replied. And neither her husband's impatience nor the fact that they were all getting hungry hurried her. At last she bought the cloth.

They stayed that night at Kicking Bird's camp. Tamma ate with them again, and afterward he sat and watched while the other men talked. Once he spoke, and Kicking Bird interpreted.

"He asks if he may come to your camp to visit you and learn about your children."

"Tell him my camp is poor and rough, not a settled town like yours.

Tell him we poor Kiowas are moving, moving all the time; I cannot tell him where to find my camp."

"He will look for it. Perhaps he will find it. He can find mine, even when we move."

"You don't move as far as we do—I know that. If he comes to my camp, I cannot throw him away. Because he is a guest, he will be fed, and I might give him a horse to go on with."

"Perhaps I will come with him. With a guide, he can surely find any camp."

"Our tipi doors stand open, as yours do."

White Shell Woman saddled the horses at daybreak, and they rode out of Kicking Bird's camp. When they were over the slope and well away, she said, "Those women. They all have brass cooking buckets and metal knives. When I told them I had bought cloth and bells for my boy, they laughed at me. They said I should have something for myself."

"We went to get things for our son. Now, when he takes out his war party, he will be the best-armed Kiowa on the Plains. He can shoot anybody or anything. With one hundred rounds of ammunition, he has enough to practice, if he wants to."

"Yes," agreed White Shell Woman. "He'll go well-armed. And won't he look fine in his new red-and-blue blanket?"*

* This red-and-blue cloth was woolen broadcloth that was woven in England and called *Strouding*, after the city of Stroud where it was manufactured. It was, and still is, widely used for officers' dress uniforms in the armies of the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in the Canadian Mounted Police. The fabric is woven in bolts fifty-four inches wide. Two one-yard lengths, stitched together so as to show both selvages, make a blanket. The selvage is woven in rainbow stripes which form a decorative band up and down the wearer's back, giving it the popular name "rainbow cloth." American woven broadcloth comes with an irregular white selvage. A red-and-blue blanket combined the best of both colors, but all-red or all-blue blankets were worn. *Strouding* is still carried as a sales item by some western trading posts.



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## *THE SUMMONS: 1870*

JUNE WAS THE MONTH for getting everything ready. Early in the month, when the moon was no bigger than a thumbnail trimming and the wind barely drifted the clouds across it, the Sun Dance priest rode out to call in the bands.

He came from the south, from Kicking Bird's camp, and Kicking Bird and his oldest son rode with him as guards. They came to Sitting Bear's camp, riding slowly on white horses, with a green cloth flag floating from a plain wooden staff to show that they came with peace in their hearts. Sitting Bear and Lone Wolf and their sons rode out to meet the newcomers. All the Big Shield Band was ready for the Sun Dance.

Straight Walking Woman put up two sets of tipi poles and stretched her own cover and White Shell Woman's cover over them to make a shade where the men could sit. There they all gathered, and while the Sun Dance priest rested on a special willow-rod bed at the back of the tipi, the others made sure they had brought nothing red into the shade with them. The bed was unpainted, and the priest rested against white-tanned hides. Nothing red must come near the Sun Dance statue or its guardian, or else the prairies would catch fire.

When they had all rested and feasted, and prayers had been said and the pipe passed around, Sitting Bear rose.

"Hear me, all you people," he began. "This is my promise for this Sun Dance. I will recognize my son who is named for me as a favorite child. In his honor, I will give four horses to the Sun Dance. In his honor, I will give a feast to his friends, the Gourd Dancers. All the best of everything shall be theirs because they are the same as my son's brothers."

White Bear stood up and shook hands with Sitting Bear. "*Aho*!" he said, speaking for all the Gourd Dance Society members.

Sitting Bear sat down, and Eagle Plume rose. "Hear me, all you people," he said. "This is my brother, and he is almost my age. I love him and honor and respect him. I will dance in this Sun Dance in his honor. I will join my father in showing all the Kiowas what my brother means to the other members of our family. That is my pledge."

Then it was Lone Wolf's turn. "Hear me, all you people. I, too, will make the son that I have named for me a favored child at this Sun Dance. He shall have the best of everything, and in his honor I pledge an all-blue blanket to the Sun Dance. I, too, will give a feast for the Gourd Dancers. They shall have all the best, and more than they can eat." Everybody laughed at this, because the Gourd Dancers were known to be young men with healthy appetites who ate more than most people. Again, White Bear thanked Lone Wolf for the other members of the society.

Straight Walking Woman spoke last. Women seldom made Sun Dance pledges, and all the people were surprised when she began to talk out to them like a man.

"Hear me, all you chiefs and people," Straight Walking Woman said. "I am a woman, and poor, but I love my son. His father and his brother have made their pledges in his honor. Now I will make mine. I will give a feast for the Bear Women, and it shall be as great a feast as the one Lone Wolf is giving for the Gourd Dancers." A little gasp of surprise went around the tipi, and White Shell Woman said, "*Na-na-na-na*—!" loud enough for everyone to hear. "And I will sit behind my son in the Sun Dance lodge, and fast and thirst with him," Straight Walking Woman ended.

The Bear Women were honored above all other Kiowa women.

Nobody was supposed to know just who belonged to the society. The Bear Women chose their own members, and when they were called to a feast, they came winding through the camp with their faces covered. Most of the women were old, but they kept a few young members so that the society would stay strong. The Bear Women had their own medicine, the people said—medicine that had come down to them from the Spider Grandmother of the Twin War Gods. Nobody but the members knew for sure, of course, but that was what the people said.

If the feast had been promised to a men's dancing or war society, one of its members would have thanked Straight Walking Woman as White Bear had thanked Sitting Bear and Lone Wolf. But since the Bear Women Society was a secret one, Straight Walking Woman could not be publicly thanked. She sat down quietly, and the ceremony went on. Young Sitting Bear and Young Lone Wolf rose, together.

"We thank you all," Young Sitting Bear began. "My family is very good to me, and I want to thank them, especially my mother. To show that I am grateful, I vow that I will dance beside my brother in the Sun Dance. I love my brother, and I want him near me all the time. This is my promise: to dance beside him in the Sun Dance."

Then Young Lone Wolf spoke. "I, too, thank all of you for what you have promised me, especially my father for a great feast for the Gourd Dancers. I, too, vow to dance in the Sun Dance, and I vow to ride with my brother-friend all the year. What happens to one of us shall happen to us both. I make this promise for everyone to hear me."

The next morning they started out with the Sun Dance priest to carry the word to the other Kiowa bands. Because Straight Walking Woman had made a Sun Dance vow as would a man, she rode with her husband and sons when the Sun Dance priest led the way out of the Big Shield Band camp.

The first day they rode north, from Tipi Pole River to the North Canadian. They visited the Biter Band here, and after resting and feasting a day, the party traveled west to find the Bull Elks. West again they rode to the Black Boys, and then south to the Kiowa Apaches. Last of all they came to the True Kiowas, the Sun Dance priest's own band and the band to which Kicking Bird belonged. They had ridden a great circle around the whole Kiowa country, from the Cross Timbers on the east to the Staked Plains on the west, from the

Mountains Standing on the south to the Arrowhead River and the edge of the Cheyenne hunting lands on the north.

Wherever the Sun Dance priest and his companions rode, they did the same things. The priest and his guards rode to the camp ahead of the others. They stopped outside the group of tipis, and the priest called out for everyone to hear:

"Kiowa people, come and listen! Hear what I say, all you Kiowa people! This year we will have a Sun Dance. We will have a Sun Dance when this moon has gone and the next one grows. When the next moon is in its first quarter, everybody come to End of the Mountains, and we will hold the Sun Dance there! Come to End of the Mountains for the Sun Dance this summer!"

After the first announcement, the priest and his guardians rode around the whole camp while the priest called out the news to the four corners of the world, so everyone would know. Then the Sun Dance company rode into camp, and the feasting and vowing began. Each time the company left a camp, the company's number had grown. All the people who rode with the priest had made Sun Dance vows, but some other vowers stayed at home to get ready to move and to prepare their offerings for the Sun Dance.

All the bands camped apart during the winter, and they came together for the Sun Dance. The place where the Sun Dance would be held was chosen by the priest, who tried to select a different spot each year so the grass would have a chance to grow back after the great horse herds had grazed on it. End of the Mountains was not a favorite place for most of the Kiowas because it was a long way west for all but the True Kiowas and the Kiowa Apaches. Still, if the priest had chosen it, there they would have to go.

In Sitting Bear's camp of the Big Shield Band, all the women were busy when the vowers came back. The dried meat and other winter foods had been packed in rawhide envelopes. The dressed hides were stacked high, and there, beside the big pile, was a smaller pile of fine hides that White Shell Woman and her sisters had painted to give as presents to other women. All the best clothes were unpacked and hung on ropes stretched around the tipis to let the summer breeze dance the winter out of their folds. Sitting Bear grumbled that he had to grope his way through a forest thicker than the Cross Timbers to find his tipi, but none of the women paid any attention to him.

As soon as they were back, Eagle Plume and Young Sitting Bear went hunting. Eagle Plume's wife, Spring Leaf, rode with them. They traveled west. They planned to meet their family at End of the Mountains, so they could kill their buffaloes as near the Sun Dance camp as possible; then they would not have far to carry the meat. By the end of ten days, they had found four small herds and had killed three buffaloes. Spring Leaf cut and dried the meat as the brothers butchered it.

"We need a fresh one for the feasts," said Eagle Plume as he and his brother smoked beside the campfire on the tenth evening.

"It seems to be harder and harder to find them," Young Sitting Bear replied. He frowned a little. "Perhaps they are being killed off down here as they are in the north."

"I don't see how," said Eagle Plume. "You never see any hunters except Indians."

"You see more of those and different ones, though," his brother reminded him. "In these ten days we've seen Pawnees and Otos, and Cheyennes and Arapahos, of course, and even some Sauk and Fox. I wouldn't be surprised if we found people from Taos Pueblo hunting on our lands before long! Nobody pays any attention to hunting territory any more; they just go south and west until they find the game."

"They don't care whose land they shoot it on," Eagle Plume agreed. "We should tell our father about it."

"Oh, yes, of course," answered Young Sitting Bear. "I suppose he knows about it, but we ought to tell him what we've seen."

Eagle Plume's wife moved a little in the firelight, and they looked at her. "These buffaloes aren't as good as some of the ones we used to get," she remarked. "These are old and thin and scrawny, no good to eat unless you boil them for a long time. You haven't killed one yet that we could roast over the coals the way we used to do. Even the tongues are tough."

Eagle Plume sighed. "I suppose that means tough dried meat for you on the road to Texas," he said.

"That's too bad," Young Sitting Bear observed. "Well, maybe we can find a young one tomorrow."

They were out and riding early, all three of them. As they were getting nearer and nearer to the Sun Dance camp, they kept a steady lookout for other Kiowas. The Gourd Dancers were to be game

wardens and camp police for this Sun Dance. If they found Young Sitting Bear, they could capture him again and take him off with them and put him to work, whether he had enough meat for his own family or not.

At midmorning they topped a rise, and Eagle Plume, who was riding ahead, held up his hand in warning. Spread out below them was the biggest buffalo herd they had seen in years. There were several young cows with calves and, in the middle of the herd, there was a buffalo with a white hide.

"Look!" Young Sitting Bear said, reining up beside his brother. "The white one! The sacred one! They will need him for the Sun Dance. How can we get him?"

"We can't. It has to be Bluff Standing. He's the only one with the right to shoot the sacred buffalo."

"What can we do?"

Eagle Plume thought quickly. "Go to End of the Mountains as fast as you can ride. We'll stay here and follow the herd so we won't lose the white buffalo. Bring Bluff Standing and as many of the Gourd Dancers as you can find. We'll keep the Cheyennes and Arapahos away, if any come along. You have the best horse. Ride!"

Young Sitting Bear threw up his hand in agreement and turned his horse. He paused for a moment at the crest of the rise, as young as the summer morning, and then he swept off, breasting the wind, loping south to End of the Mountains as if he were already heading for Texas.



# CHAPTER NINE

## *GUARDING THE BUFFALOES: 1870*

ALL THE GOURD DANCERS were gathered at White Bear's camp when Young Sitting Bear rode in. He stopped at his brother-friend's tipi, and White Bear came out to meet him.

"Get down, friend," said the older man. "What is the news?"

"My brother and I have found the buffalo herd," Young Sitting Bear answered. "There's a white one with them, a young bull."

"Where?"

"Over the rise and a quarter day's ride for a young man with a fast horse. Call the people. There's enough for everybody."

Packing Rocks went out, calling through the camps at White Bear's order. "Kiowa people!" he shouted. "Come and bring your weapons! Buffalo herd less than half a day away. Bring your guns. Bring your bows. Women, bring your knives. Everybody get ready! Everybody come!"

As Packing Rocks moved on, you could see the scurry of people behind him, like the scurry of little fish on the sandy bottom when a boy drops a stone into the clear Tipi Pole River. Women moved quickly, slinging packsaddles on their load horses and fastening the long poles and wicker platforms of the drags in place.

Men came out of their wives' tipis with their guns or bows in their

hands. Those who had to shoot in the old-fashioned way checked arrow points and fletchings, and made sure of extra bowstrings before they did anything else. The men with guns looked to their powder and supplies of molded bullets.

The boys of the Herders Society ran for the pasture. By the time the people in camp were ready to ride, their horses had been driven in and were waiting for them. Some of the oldest men and women, those who were no longer able to go hunting, collected the children at a tipi in the center of the camp and tied them together, wrist to wrist, so they would not try to run out of camp after their mothers.

When everybody was ready, White Bear and the Gourd Dancers rode out from behind White Bear's tipi. White Bear was painted for dancing, and so were the rest of them. All the Gourd Dancers wore their best clothes, and their red-and-blue blankets were knotted over their shoulders. White Bear held up his hand.

"Listen to me everybody," he called out. "The Gourd Dancers are going to ride ahead and locate the herd. Eagle Plume and his wife are there holding them. Eagle Plume can hunt if he wants to, but the Gourd Dancers will not hunt. Now, be sure you listen to me. Nobody is to call out and frighten the buffaloes. Nobody is to rush the herd. Nobody is to go ahead of others. You are all to ride together so the game will not scatter, and then we will all have an equal chance to shoot. Anyone who disobeys these orders will be whipped."

"*Haw*!" shouted all the men. And the women nodded their heads and said, "*Haw*!"

It was fine riding out on the buffalo hunt, almost like a dream of riding. The prairies were still green, and in places they were flower-studded. All along the creeks, the cottonwoods and willows grew thick and green, and the later summer's dust had not yet powdered them over. The sky was blue, and the few clouds you could see above the trees were as light as cottonwood fluff. The day was hot, but a breath of coolness underran the heat, as if spring were reluctant to leave the flowering world. When they reached the top of the ridge, cloud shadows darkened all of the slope below them; but beyond the deeper color, the sun shone and the grass brightened again.

Even the older people riding behind White Bear and the Gourd Dancers looked young as they went out into the world of sun and

shadows and colors that shifted like the pink inner lining of a mussel-shell. All the earth was pearly, and the people rode through melting and changing light.

The Gourd Dancers strung themselves out in a long line across the crest of the ridge, and the others gathered by families behind them. White Bear raised his clenched right fist above his head into the air, and the Gourd Dancers paced their horses forward on either side of his place in the center of the line. The other people sat still and steady until the Gourd Dancers reached the dip at the bottom of the ridge. Then White Bear looped the lines on his horse's neck and raised both arms, his clenched fists shooting up into the air like bullets.

Now all the people began to ride, stringing out behind the Gourd Dancers. Men with fast horses had their hands full holding their mounts in, for pasture had been good and the horses were well-fed and fresh. The women, leading their drag horses, dropped back and made a second cluster behind the men. Each family in camp was related to one Gourd Dancer at least, and they grouped themselves behind their relatives.

After a little while, the horses settled down to a smooth gait, and the whole camp traveled at a fast walk. They had left camp at noonday, and it was about half-way through the afternoon when Young Sitting Bear rode across to White Bear, who then signaled a halt. He listened to Young Sitting Bear, and then turned in his saddle to face the people while he spoke to them in sign language.

"He says the herd was just over this rise, around a buffalo wallow, when he left it. His brother and his brother's wife were on this side. Where is Bluff Standing?"

Bluff Standing rode out of the line of men and raised his hand.

"Come forward," White Bear signed to him. "The first buffalo to be killed is the white one for the Sun Dance sacrifice. Remember, you must ride into the herd quietly and shoot it with one arrow. Everybody else must wait until the sacrifice is killed."

Bluff Standing rode forward, ahead of the Gourd Dancers who followed him. At the top of the ridge, they came in sight of the herd. Eagle Plume and his wife were nowhere in sight, and the buffaloes were spread out around the buffalo wallow. Some of them were shoulder deep in the muddy water, others were grazing around the margin,

and a few were licking the salt that thinly coated the stones on the north side of the shallow pool. It was easy to pick out the white buffalo who was grazing by himself on the west side.

The Gourd Dancers motioned to Bluff Standing to go ahead of them, but he turned back and asked for help. Young Sitting Bear, Young Lone Wolf, Packing Rocks, and White Bear went to assist him. They had to turn the buffalo so Bluff Standing could come up to it from the east.

Very slowly and quietly, the Gourd Dancers coaxed their horses forward in a walk. They circled the wallow so as to come up to the buffaloes from the north, against the wind. Eagle Plume rode out of the line of trees fringing a creek to the north, and joined his brother and their friends.

Carefully, without speaking, the men surrounded the buffaloes. The herd began to shift as some of the buffaloes came up out of the water to join the others. A cow bellowed for her calf, and then another cow called out. The herd was moving away from the white buffalo, and he was alone, still grazing on the west side.

Bluff Standing hesitated, as if he were uncertain what to do. White Bear signaled to him, and Bluff Standing nodded. All the Gourd Dancers and their horses were as still as if men and animals were one. Bluff Standing put his horse in the water. For a moment it hung back, but Bluff Standing kneed it forward. He drew his bow from the case hanging beside his quiver on his left shoulder, and then he drew an arrow and notched it to the string. For a breath they all hung there, man and horse and buffalo, without motion.

Back in the line of hunters to the southward, a man shouted. The herd seemed to shift and move forward with one motion. Bluff Standing drew his arrow, and it broke through the buffalo's chest, right over the heart. As the rest of the herd began to walk quickly and a few buffaloes scattered at the edges started to run, the white buffalo shuddered all over, still facing east, and dropped to its knees. Then its whole carcass went forward along the ground, and Bluff Standing waved to his wife to come and help him with the skinning.

The other hunters went after the rest of the herd, and the Gourd Dancers rode into the line to look for the man whose call had startled

the animals. Young Sitting Bear found White Bear's wife, White Necked Woman, and she jerked her chin over to the north.

"Calls Eagles," she said. "He couldn't keep his mouth shut."

Young Sitting Bear rode back to White Bear. "Your wife says it was Calls Eagles," he reported.

"Go after him," White Bear ordered. "Get the others, and go after him."

"Come on," called Young Sitting Bear. "Follow me, all you Gourd Dancers."

They rode into the thick of things. Men were shooting at short range. They had been quick enough to stop the herd from stampeding. Everywhere there was smoke and noise, dust, shouting, and the snapping of bowstrings. Calls Eagles was there, shooting with a new gun as good as Young Sitting Bear's. They came up to him, and White Bear struck the gun down out of Calls Eagles' hand.

"You heard the order," White Bear said. "Nobody was to move, nobody was to talk, until the sacrifice was killed. You could have cost us the Sun Dance. You could have cost us the winter's food." He took the lines and led Calls Eagles' horse up on the hill, out of the hunt. The other Gourd Dancers followed him.

Calls Eagles sat on his horse, a dun gelding, in the center of the ring of big men. "That's a good horse," White Bear said. "I'll take it for Bluff Standing. He deserves a good hunting horse for the work he's just done. One shot and that buffalo was dead!"

Slowly, Calls Eagles got down from his horse. "I am your prisoner," he said. "What I did was wrong, and I know it. Take my horse, and take the other three I captured in Mexico last year."

"All right," said White Bear. He held out his hand. Calls Eagles broke three twigs from a nearby mesquite bush and passed them to White Bear. "Has he been punished enough, do you think?" White Bear asked the other Gourd Dancers.

"No," said Packing Rocks. "If the herd had stampeded, we might all have starved through the winter. Buffaloes are scarce these days. He can get more horses. His wife will lend him some of hers so he can get them. I say he needs to be punished more."

"What shall we do to him?" White Bear demanded, looking from

one Gourd Dancer to the next. They all knew the answer, and they all gave it together.

"Bind him and beat him."

"Not tear up his camp?" White Bear asked.

"No," said Young Sitting Bear. It was what his father would have wanted him to say. "Bind him and beat him, but don't tear up his camp. He has a young wife and a little baby. It isn't fair to punish them."

"Bind him and beat him," White Bear directed them, and the Gourd Dancers dismounted and dropped their horses' lines on the ground. The horses stood while the men surrounded Calls Eagles.

Calls Eagles held out his hands. They tied a rawhide rope to each wrist and to each ankle. Packing Rocks unfastened a bundle at the neck of his horse and took out four *bois d' arc* picket pins. They drove the pins into the ground and staked Calls Eagles out, face down, with each arm and each leg tied to a picket pin.

White Bear struck first, with his riding crop falling hard between Calls Eagles' shoulders. Calls Eagles' head jerked up from the ground, and he pulled against the ropes, but he did not make a sound. One at a time, each of the twelve Gourd Dancers struck the captive with their crops.

Behind them, a woman wept. When it was all over, Calls Eagles' wife, her face blotched with dusty tears, looked up at White Bear. "May I care for him now?" she asked.

"Yes," said White Bear. "Set him loose," he ordered. Young Sitting Bear and Young Lone Wolf loosed the bindings and returned the picket pins to Packing Rocks.

"Is he alive?" Calls Eagles' wife asked of White Bear. Her husband's back was nothing but a mass of pounded meat.

White Bear turned the man's body over and studied his face. He laid a blade of grass across Calls Eagles' mouth, and the blade stirred a little, and stirred again. "He's alive, and he will get well," White Bear assured the woman. "We Gourd Dancers know how to beat a man without killing him."

"Thank you," she said. "My baby and I would have a hard time if he were dead."

"He won't die," said White Bear. He studied the woman's face.

"I'll leave these two young men with you, to help you care for him and load him on a drag. I'll give you half my share of meat from the hunt, so you can all live through the winter. You and the baby are innocent, and he's suffered enough. It's a long time since we had to beat a man."

"He's young," his wife said softly. "He was excited. He didn't mean any harm."

"He's young," White Bear agreed, "but since he was as young as your baby, who's just beginning to understand, he's known better than to scare the game." He motioned to Young Sitting Bear and Young Lone Wolf. "Go and get water and cottonwood fluff," he ordered. "Thistledown, if you can find it. There's a buffalo doctor in camp, Paws Ground. Bring him here to help care for this man. But get back with the water right away." The two young men mounted and rode off.

White Bear stood looking down at the unconscious man, turned on his face again, studying his wounds. He looked over at the woman. "We'll help you," he assured her. "When a man's been punished, that's all—for that time. If it happens again, he may not live. Remember that, and remind him of it."

White Bear mounted and, with the other Gourd Dancers, rode away to rejoin the hunters. They had much of their work still to do.

By this time, half the herd had stampeded and was gone, but the buffaloes that were left would make a feast for the Kiowas on many a winter night. Every woman was busy with her husband's kill, butchering out the meat as quickly as possible.

White Bear sat on his horse a moment and watched White Necked Woman as she slit the throat of a buffalo calf and then jerked her knife through the thin belly skin, down to the tail. She and her sister, Humming Bird Woman, took hold of the hide on either side of the slit and pulled it back, away from the still warm flesh. They ringed the tail and pulled it off whole. White Necked Woman laid the tail aside. "This will make a trimming for my husband's shield," she remarked, and Humming Bird Woman nodded.

Working from either end of the body, the two women slit through layers of flesh and fat, and exposed the ribs. Inside the body cavity were the buffalo's two stomachs, and they peeled away the leaves of fat from stomachs and intestines, taking out the kidneys and liver. Bold Mustache joined them.

"Give us that," White Bear said, holding out his hand. And his wife handed him the liver. "Get down, friend," White Bear invited Bold Mustache.

Standing beside their horses, the two men sliced the liver and squirted it with gall. They ate the tidbits and fed bites to the women, who were stripping the meat from the hindquarters and piling it all in the hide to be dragged back to camp. When they had finished, all the buffalo meat was packed back in the hide, and the ground where they had butchered was almost clean.

White Bear rode on, through the butchering. The Gourd Dancers would be supplied with meat by the other hunters because their duties as police kept them from hunting for themselves. Doing their part, the Gourd Dancers' wives helped the other women butcher and partly dry their meat because their own men did not bring in any game. They were allowed to claim part of each animal they butchered, as White Necked Woman had done.

The days were growing longer, and the afternoon light hung in the sky until late. When day was gone and the half-moon rose, the Gourd Dancers brought wood and piled fires around so that the women could see to work. By the mingling of firelight and moonlight, the skinning and butchering went on, and the work of the big hunt was finished before day lighted the east.

That night, people slept by their horses if they slept at all. They breakfasted on meat that the women had toasted over the coals or on raw liver and kidneys, and they laughed at their feast. Finally, they loaded their horses and started back to camp, with the Gourd Dancers leading the way and scouting for them.

Last of the camp came Calls Eagles, tied face down to the drag behind his wife's horse who had no other load to bring in. He was alive, and sometimes he was conscious, as Young Sitting Bear and Young Lone Wolf, who were riding beside him, noticed. But more often, Calls Eagles did not know what was going on around him, and the two young men agreed that that was a good thing.

"If ever I am hurt as bad as that," Young Sitting Bear said to his brother when Eagle Plume had dropped back to join them at the nooning, "don't let me live. Because you are my brother and love me, take your knife and cut my throat."

Calls Eagles' wife looked at him. "That isn't love," she said. "To love you, he would have to help you get well, as you are all helping my husband."

"Women's love and men's taking care of women are different from men's love for men," Eagle Plume said to her solemnly. "Because I love my brother, I would do as he asks me, if I had to."



# CHAPTER TEN

## *THE OWL SPEAKS: 1870*

NOW ALL THE BANDS were gathered, and the tipis were pitched, facing inward, in a great circle. This was the one time of the year when all the tipis were not supposed to face east. Instead, they faced the Sun Dance lodge.

As they came in, each band was shown its place by the Gourd Dancers. The Biters camped south of the planned opening on the east side of the camp circle. Then came the Bull Elks, in the center of the south side. Filling up the western arc were the True Kiowas, and north of them were the smaller bands—the Big Shields, the Kiowa Apaches, and the Black Boys. If any band was too large to set all its tipis on the rim of the camp circle, the Gourd Dancers showed the people how to set one tipi behind another. The inner ring around the lodge was reserved for the band leaders and the priests, with their families.

All the Gourd Dancers, some from every band, gathered at White Bear's tipi, on the south side of the camp, for White Bear was a Bull Elk. Here, behind his own painted tipi, his wives had set up a new white canvas one and had built a great willow-thatched arbor. The other dancing societies had gathered in their own places, wherever an important man had set a shelter for his brother members from other

bands. Here the men smoked and talked during the daytime, and here they gathered for dancing and feasting at night.

The shield societies were smaller than the dancing societies, and much more sacred and secret. The Eagle Shields gathered in Sitting Bear's tipi; the Buffalo Shields, in Bluff Standing's. The Crazy Dogs, who were equal to the shield societies in people's eyes even though they were not secret, had a meeting place behind Sitting Bear's tipi. Off on the west side of camp, the Owl Shields, who prophesied the future, had set their black tipi. Nobody went near it. The Kiowas were as much afraid of the Owl Shields as they were of owls.

The oldest men collected in Anko's tipi where they smoked and talked for a long time, reviewing the events of the past winter and deciding what name it should be given in Anko's year count. They finally agreed to call it the Winter the Bugle was Blown.

The bugle-blowing was really a kind of joke. The men of White Bear's band, with White Bear leading them, had been out on a small raid to the west, into New Mexico. Coming back, they met some troopers from the new post near the Salt Plains, the one the soldiers called Fort Supply, and had a fight with them.

There were only four men in the detachment, but two of them had long, sharp, curved knives hanging from their belts, and one of them carried the bugle. After the men were disposed of, White Bear picked up the bugle and the sabers as war trophies, and he and his party had started home.

The women and children and old men and boys were camped in a bend of the North Canadian River. There the water went around a narrow neck of land and almost made an island. They called it Little Almost-Island Place and, with the water and quicksands around them on three sides, had felt safe there. The old men and the boys could protect a camp in that place with no trouble.

During the day, before White Bear returned, some of the children were playing on the neck of land. They made a play camp, with the little girls' toy tipis and the little boys' stick horses. And to make it as real as they could, the girls dug a fortification ditch across the neck of land, between the play camp and the real one.

Instead of waiting until morning, White Bear decided to bring his men in at night. When they were getting close to the camp, he put

the bugle to his lips and blew. He couldn't play the same kinds of tunes the white men did, but he made a lot of racket. Everybody in camp heard him and woke in terror. They thought their camp was being attacked, like Black Kettle's.

While the people in camp were rushing around, with the old men and the boys looking for their weapons, and the women pitching the tipi covers up to the tops of the poles to save them from being burnt, White Bear and his men started to cross the neck of land to the camp.

The first horses tripped over the fortification ditch the children had left. The second line of horses tripped over the first line, and there they were. Everybody milled around in the dark, men shouting and women and children crying. Not until daylight was anybody sure what had happened. Then they could see, and things got straightened out quickly.

After that, there was a rule. If the children dug a ditch near the camp, they must fill it in before sunset. And White Bear made a rule for himself. He would blow the bugle only by day and in the middle of camp where everybody could see him.

So, with much laughing, the old men named that winter year the Winter the Bugle was Blown.

By day the camp was busy, with people coming and going, visiting and laughing, meeting friends they had not seen for a year, and getting ready for the Sun Dance. At the end of the fourth day of camping, the lodge was set up, with its opening facing east, and it was time for the dancers to go in. Now the camp became quiet; even the children hushed. Sitting Bear put down his old, straight deer-tibia pipe and pulled his blue blanket up around his shoulders, as he rose to go to the lodge and watch the dancers go in.

He was an old man, and sometimes he felt old. He had danced in four Sun Dances when he was younger, and much of his power had come to him from the Sun Dance image. Now he had no need to dance, either to gather power or to prove his power. Now he could look on—he could watch the others dance, and he could pray for them in his heart.

The Herders entered the lodge first because they were so young. The Herders came from the east and went around the lodge four times, east to south to west to north, before they went inside. Each made three

feinted steps before he took the fourth, which placed him within the lodge. Then came the Gourd Dancers, the Black Legs, and the Foxes. Last of all, the members of the Crazy Dogs Society who were going to dance went in the lodge.

With each society went its "sisters," two young women chosen from leading families for their beauty and their good character. A "sister" had the same standing as a brother member. If she wanted to marry, the members of the society, like her own brothers, had to approve of the husband she had chosen, and she could never marry into her own society. When the brothers danced, the sisters stood behind them and danced in their honor, and when the dance ended, the women whooped for the men.

Sitting Bear seated himself behind the Crazy Dogs to watch the opening dance. He looked across the lodge and saw Straight Walking Woman sitting behind the Gourd Dance Society members. Here she would stay till the dance ended, unless her son dropped out. She looked very pretty tonight, and Sitting Bear again felt the bump of his heart inside him, just as he had felt it the first time he saw her.

Her hair fell down her back like black water. The parting of her hair was painted yellow, and she had painted yellow moons on her cheeks. Her dress was of plain white buckskin, with no painting or beadwork on it, and her high boot moccasins were of yellow-dyed hide. Like a young girl, she sat there. Nobody would believe, Sitting Bear thought, that she could have a son old enough to dance in the Sun Dance.

Sitting Bear's eyes went from his wife to their son. Young Sitting Bear was quiet, resting and waiting, with White Bear, as his sponsor, sitting behind him and Eagle Plume, as his dancing partner, beside him. The boy had eaten a good meal about an hour before, and had had plenty of water to drink. He was prepared for the four-day fast—as well as his father could prepare him. Eagle Plume had danced before. In fact, Sitting Bear suddenly remembered, this was Eagle Plume's fourth Sun Dance. It didn't seem possible. Time went by more quickly now than it used to.

Kicking Bird, as sponsor to his own son, sat with the Herders. There they all were: the men he trusted, the sons he loved, his wives, and the men he distrusted and doubted. It was a big camp, a big circle, a big

lodge, and a big dance. All the things that made a man's life came together in the Sun Dance. Sitting Bear had never thought of that before.

Now the Sun Dance priest rose and offered his pipe to the sun and the moon and the four corners of the earth. It was an old bone pipe, like the one Sitting Bear preferred to smoke. Behind the priest, in its own willow arbor built inside the lodge, the Sun Dance image hung. The priest spoke first to it.

"You, Taime,* Who guard the Kiowa people on earth as our Father Above guards them from on high. You, Taime, Who are our friend. We are offering this dance to You, Taime. You have been good to us already. You showed our young men a big buffalo herd, and you held it together until the hunters could come. Now all the people have meat in their tipis. You found us a herd with a white buffalo in it so we could make You the proper offering. Taime, You have been very good to us, and we pray You to continue Your blessing. Let the buffalo stay as long as the Kiowa people last. Let them all continue on this earth forever. This is my prayer."

Sitting Bear had heard the priest pray like this many times before. It had never frightened him until tonight. Now, suddenly, he saw his own magic knife standing point down in a fire and his own hand reaching through the flames to pick it up. He shivered. That knife had fallen, and there was a curse in the world. He had tried to take it on himself—but had he? Could any one man take all the evil in the world on his own shoulders? An owl hooted somewhere on the edge of the camp, and Sitting Bear shivered again. Yes, all the things that made up a man's life came together in the Sun Dance, the bad and the good.

The men danced four times on each day of the Sun Dance—once when full daylight came, once between that time and when the sun

* Taime (timey): This Sun Dance fetish was guarded like the Ten Grandmothers, but it was placed on public display during the annual summer Sun Dance. It is said to have been given to a Kiowa by an Arapaho brother-friend in about 1800 as a personal medicine. The only difference between the Taime and other personal medicines was that its ceremony required the presence of every able-bodied Kiowa. There is certainly a strong resemblance in detail between the Arapaho and Kiowa Sun Dances. The Taime is stored in a bank in Dallas, Texas, but no true Kiowa Sun Dance has been held since the 1880's.

stood straight overhead, once when the sun had reached the western quarter of the sky, and the last time just before the sun was ready to set. After each dance, the priest chased the running dancers around the inside of the lodge, brushing them with a crow-wing fan to give them his power. Between dances, the men rested on sage spread out to make beds for them, and smoked. They prayed quietly or took instructions from their sponsors. Each man could go out of the tipi twice, between the two morning dances and between the two afternoon dances, to relieve himself. His sponsor had always to go with him.

On the afternoon of the second day, Sitting Bear prepared to honor his son. Three times he lifted his foot to step into the lodge before he finally crossed the opening and stood beside the center fire from which the priest lighted his pipe.

There were taller men among the Kiowas than Sitting Bear, but at this moment he looked like a tall man. There were men who were bigger physically, in every way, but when Sitting Bear stood up and faced the people, no one paid attention to the others. He wore a plain, unpainted robe and a straight dark breechcloth, and there was no trimming on his moccasins, only the long fringe which dragged behind the heels to wipe his footprints from the earth. Sitting Bear held up his hand, which was smaller than a woman's, the hand of a man who rode and fought but did not labor. And the lodge suddenly was still.

"Listen to me, everybody," Sitting Bear began. "This is the day when my family wants to honor my son. When he was born, I gave him my own name because he was closer to me than any other child. Some people thought it was wrong of me to do that." He looked over at White Bear, who nodded stubbornly. "But when a man has a son he loves and when he feels as close to him as if he were that boy's mother, it is a little thing to share a name."

Sitting Bear paused for a moment. "Then he began to grow up, and now he is a young man. The Gourd Dancers have honored him by taking him in as a member. He is a young man they can be proud of. He is a young man we can all be proud of. His mother is fasting with him, and his brother is dancing with him. So the rest of us want to show our love and respect for him, too." He beckoned. Straight Walking Woman, White Shell Woman, and their sisters joined him. Eagle Plume got up and stood beside his father. Eagle Boy and Singing Girl

came to Straight Walking Woman. Then their other relatives joined them. Last of all, Young Sitting Bear went to stand beside his father, with the crown of willows on his head and the bracelets of sage on his wrists which White Bear had tied on to make him cool while he was dancing.

"I have already promised four horses to the Sun Dance," said Sitting Bear. He held out his hand with four painted sticks in it, and the Sun Dance priest came forward and took the tokens. Later, he could claim the horses.

"Now I will give four horses each to four old men who can no longer ride and take their own," Sitting Bear went on, and he called the names: "Kills Utes, Blue Horse, Rides Away, and Kinky Head." Each old man was helped forward to take his sticks from Sitting Bear. And before he went back to his place, each man placed his hand on Young Sitting Bear's shoulder and blessed him.

It was a great giveaway, and before it ended, Sitting Bear and his family had only their personal saddle and pack horses. They kept just enough hides for bedding and for gifts to the Bear Women. They had kept back food and cooking utensils because they would need them to prepare two feasts, but everybody understood about that. Straight Walking Woman invited the Bear Women to feast at her tipi the next night, and Sitting Bear invited the Gourd Dancers for the last night, after the lodge had been closed.

At last he said, "We come into the world with nothing in our hands and a cry on our lips. If a man is strong, he can strip himself down to the place where he was born, and still get back whatever he needs from his own skill. I have given away the best I had, all I had. Nothing is left to me but my song. Now I want to give that to the Crazy Dogs. Drummers, play for me and I will sing it."

The drummers, sitting on the south side of the door, pounded on the piece of rawhide, which they used instead of a drum, and then began a steady beat. Sitting Bear started to sing:

*I live, but I will not live forever.*
*Mysterious moon, you only remain,*
*Powerful sun, you alone remain,*
*Wonderful earth, you remain forever.*
*All of us soldiers must die.*

After the fourth singing, the other Crazy Dogs took up the song and sang it through with Sitting Bear. They stood up and pounded on the earth with lances they kept to drive through their scarf trailers when they faced the enemy to fight until killed. There were only ten Crazy Dogs, but the earth shook when they sang Sitting Bear's song.

Now the giveaway was over, and they all returned to their places. The drummers started the Sun Dance songs again, the happy songs that women often sang as lullabies, and young men as love songs. The priest rose and motioned to the dancers, and they also rose. They put their eagle wing-bone whistles between their teeth, and set their eyes on the white buffalo skin tied at the top of the center pole of the lodge. They began bending their knees and straightening them, swaying forward and back in time to the singing, and the piercing eagle cry of the whistles kept time with the dancers' movements.

Sitting Bear left the lodge and started back to his tipi. He was tired; he was an old man. And it wasn't easy for an old man to make himself poor and start again as if he were a young man. The late July afternoon was heavy with heat; a storm was waiting to be born. Not a breath of wind moved among the cottonwoods, and the air he breathed felt like a lump in his lungs. As he crossed the camp, Sitting Bear looked around him. A white-topped wagon stood on the north side of the Sun Dance circle.

As he drew nearer to the wagon, Sitting Bear saw that it was painted red. He hurried. He must get everything red away from the camp right away, before anything went wrong with the dance. Any Indian should know better! Red would heat the dancers and make things harder for them. It might also bring a prairie fire. Then a man stepped from behind the wagon, a white man in black clothes and a straight black hat. It was Tamma.

"Go away!" Sitting Bear said, first in Kiowa and then in Comanche. Tamma shook his head. Whether he did not understand, or whether he did and was refusing to go, Sitting Bear could not tell. He only knew the man stood there facing him, without moving.

Sitting Bear looked around. There was no one, not even one person he could get for an interpreter. White Bear and Kicking Bird were both in the lodge. He tried sign language, and Tamma seemed to understand him better, but he still shook his head. Tamma would not go

away; he would wait for Kicking Bird. He knew the sign for his friend's name, and made it.

The white man was a guest in the Kiowa camp, so Sitting Bear could not hurt him or refuse him anything he wanted. There was nothing to be done. Perhaps the red paint on the wagon would not hurt anybody, after all. Tamma was a white man. His ways were different from Indian ways. Perhaps it wouldn't make any difference.

Sitting Bear did take the lines and lead the horses, which were still hitched to the wagon, away from the main camp. He found a place near the creek, under an elm tree, and showed Tamma that he could camp there. Tamma seemed to be satisfied, and Sitting Bear was almost shocked by the white man's stupidity. Any Indian knew better than to camp under an elm tree when a storm might be coming. Elms drop their branches as children drop their toys, as heedless as children of where the limbs may fall. Sitting Bear left Tamma unhitching the horses and returned to his own camp.

His wives were waiting for him, and he embraced each one in turn. They were good women; they had done everything that mothers could to help him and Straight Walking Woman honor their son. He told them where Tamma was camped and sent them to take food to the white man.

On the third day, Young Sitting Bear fell down. The Sun Dance priest was chasing the dancers around the lodge; it was the fourth chase of the day, at the end of the fourth dance, and the fourth round of the chase when the boy dropped. He did not stumble or trip; he went straight down on his face. Sitting Bear, forgetting about the three try steps, ran into the lodge to pick his son up, and White Bear joined him.

Together they carried Young Sitting Bear to his bed at the side of the lodge and laid him on it. And with their eagle-wing fans, they fanned him, along his legs and arms to his heart. After a few moments, he opened his eyes and sat up. He did not move again for a short time.

"Are you all right?" his father asked. "Did you have a vision?"

Young Sitting Bear nodded. "I had a vision."

"Do you want to leave the lodge?" asked White Bear. "After a vision, you are free."

"I will stay, but I won't dance," answered Young Sitting Bear. "I think it will be better if I stay as long as my brother stays."

All that day and night, he stayed where he was, leaning against a backrest Straight Walking Woman had brought into the lodge for him on the first day. He fasted and thirsted with the other men, although he did not dance. Most of the time his eyes were down, as if they were searching the earth for truth. Sitting Bear wondered what those eyes had seen when they were shut.

At the end of the fourth day, the Sun Dance priest chased the men around and out of the lodge, and when the others had left, Young Sitting Bear got up and went away, too.

At the camp, White Shell Woman and her sister had set up a new, yellow-painted tipi for Young Sitting Bear to entertain the Gourd Dancers. It had new poles which were bought from some Shoshonis who had heard of the Sun Dance and had come south to visit. It was one of the most beautiful tipis anyone had ever seen, and it was complete, furnished with everything a young man could want to make him happy.

Sitting Bear called the Gourd Dancers to come and feast with his son in his new tipi, and they all came, though some of them were worn out with dancing. Even Young Sitting Bear, looking half asleep, with his face drawn and pale, came from his mother's tipi. He sat in his place on the west side of the tipi, with his father to his north and his brother to his south, while all the Gourd Dancers who had not taken part in the Sun Dance stuffed themselves with White Shell Woman's good food. The dancers took only a little warm, unsalted broth. It would not be safe for them to eat until tomorrow.

They smoked and they ate; they ate and they smoked. One after another, the Gourd Dancers told their war deeds. Young Sitting Bear sat with his eyes down, listening to the others. When they had finished, he stood up.

"My brothers and sisters," he began, "you can all see me. I am a very young man, and I have no reason to be proud except that my family loves me. You know what they did for me yesterday.

"I have no war deeds. There is nothing I can tell you about myself or what I have accomplished. My shield is still white, not painted like my father's.

"But I don't want my shield to stay that way. I am going to take out a war party. Do any of you want to go? We will start when the

Sun Dance camp breaks up. I am now calling for volunteers."

Sitting Bear reached out his hand to stop the boy, and then he drew it back. The vow had been made months ago, and everybody knew about it by now. What if Kicking Bird and Tamma were both in camp? They wouldn't leave until after the party had set out, and they need not know which direction it would take. Sitting Bear leaned forward and touched his son's arm.

"Go east, boy," he instructed him.

Young Sitting Bear, standing tall in the firelight, looked down at his father. "East?" he queried.

"East first, at least," Sitting Bear ordered. His son nodded.

"You hear my father," he said, unable to keep the puzzlement out of his voice. "East first, then south—those are his words. Now, who is coming with me?"

First Young Lone Wolf, then one and then another of the Gourd Dancers rose and pledged himself. At last it came to White Bear's turn.

"Hear me, all of you," he began. "You all know me. You know I am a man. I have led many war parties myself, and I am not afraid to go on another.

"This young man's father is my friend. I honor and respect him and his favorite son. But if I were to go, I would be thought of as the leader, even if I were not.

"So, in honor of this young man and his father and to show my respect for them, I am not going with this war party. I shall stay here in the camp, move with my family when the time comes, and wait for the young men to come home. If there is any trouble, if the white soldiers bother them, then I will step in and talk. If anything goes wrong, I will take the responsibility."

Sitting Bear and Lone Wolf exchanged glances. They were thinking the same thing. White Bear would get some credit out of the war party, no matter what happened. They weren't surprised. And they must not offend White Bear. They needed him to talk to the white men for them.

Sitting Bear himself rose to speak. "I have not told anyone until now," he said, "but there is a white man camped near us. He is named Tamma, and he has been in Kicking Bird's camp. Kicking Bird says he will teach our children to speak the white man's language and to make

gardens. I say he and Kicking Bird are well off together, and we can let them stay that way. But because Tamma is here, I think this should go as a hunting party, not a raiding party, when it leaves camp. Go out when you are ready, but go quietly. Go east, as if you were looking for deer. Then circle around after a day's travel, and go south and then west. What if you lose a day at the beginning? You'll make it up later."

"*Haw*!" said all the Gourd Dancers in approval. "*Haw*!"

Sitting Bear drew his robe around him. He motioned with his head to Lone Wolf, and the two friends left the tipi where the young men were eagerly planning their raid, and where White Bear listened and put in a word from time to time.

Across and around the camps where the societies were meeting and feasting, the drums were beating. A little fire burned in front of Sitting Bear's own tipi, and he could see the shadowy shape of a woman beside it. Straight Walking Woman. He clasped Lone Wolf's hand for good night, and went to sit beside her in the mingling of firelight and moonlight.

"Did he have a vision?" Straight Walking Woman asked after a while.

"He said so, but he did not tell me what it was."

"I hope it was a good one."

"Unless it lets him tell, that's something we'll never know."

Straight Walking Woman leaned forward to put a stick on the fire. As she drew back her hand, the owl spoke from the elm thicket by the creek. Straight Walking Woman's hand went to her mouth. "*Na-na-na-na-na*!" she breathed. "*Saṗ'odl*! Wicked bird, go away. Don't hurt our son."

Sitting Bear shook his fist in the direction of the sound. "Go away," he ordered. "Sit on the limb above the white man's wagon and put your curse on him. Do as I tell you!" He laughed. "It'll be all right," he assured Straight Walking Woman. "You'll see. He's just come to bother the white man. Come on, let's go to bed." He rose and reached to pull her up.

Directly over their heads, the owl hooted once again.*

* Another account of this Sun Dance can be found in my *The Ten Grandmothers*.



# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## *EMPTY SADDLES: 1870*

EARLY IN THE MORNING of the day his son was to set out on his first raid, Sitting Bear, looking around him, could see that the Sun Dance camp was breaking up. Some people already had their tipis down and were cooking their last breakfast over small fires on the ground. In other places, there were gaps in the tipi circle to show where families had left.

Under the elm tree stood Tamma's wagon. One of Kicking Bird's wives had moved a tipi beside it but out of range of the elm, and was cooking breakfast for her husband and his guest. Kicking Bird came back from the creek, his wet hair plastered down to his head, and stood by the fire straightening his locks with his fingers and talking to his wife. Tamma came out of the wagon and joined them. Then all three sat down to pray and eat.

Sitting Bear shrugged his shoulders and picked up his pipe before he went to Lone Wolf's tipi. They had agreed that the boys would leave from there, because it was farther from the wagon than Sitting Bear's and was hidden from it by the densest setting of tipis.

Straight Walking Woman was there before him. She and Lone Wolf's wife were packing extra moccasins for the boys. They each had made a double saddle pad, and between the two layers of soft-tanned

buffalo hide, they were placing a layer of moccasins. They knew if Kicking Bird saw extra moccasins going out of camp he would be sure it was a raid, not a simple hunting party. Guns and bows were all right and could be shown; no one could hunt without weapons.

Now, a few at a time, the young men began gathering. There were eight of them, besides Young Sitting Bear and Young Lone Wolf. White Bear came across from his camp. They all stood there in the blaze of morning, waiting for something they could not name. This was all strange. There had been no parade the night before, no public sacrifices of women's hair and finger joints, not even one song to encourage them.

Young Sitting Bear must have felt it most strongly, for he turned suddenly to his father and said, "Give us a song, please. Don't let us go away without singing."

Sitting Bear nodded. He beat time with his pipe for a moment, and then began to sing a song, not his own song but Spotted Bird's song of an empty saddle:

*I am going away from you.*
*I will be gone a long time.*
*Perhaps some morning you will see my horse,*
*Coming back with his saddle empty.*
*Lead him around the camp when all of my soldiers ride,*
*Look at that empty saddle,*
*And know I am riding, too.*

They all sang it together after Sitting Bear had gone through the song once; but the women did not war whoop when the singing ended, and the boys mounted their horses and went out of camp in a strange, flat, empty silence.

Now began the time of waiting. There was little anyone left behind in camp could do, but what Sitting Bear could do, he must. Though the heat still held the world in the tightness of its clenched fist, and even breathing was hard, he must move and do his best to protect his son.

Sitting Bear sent for Straight Walking Woman. "I must make an offering to the Grandmothers," he said. "Do you know how many priests are left in camp?"

"White Horse and Packing Rocks have both left," she answered. "But all the others are here."

"Call them," Sitting Bear directed her. "We will make a feast for them, but first all of us must have a sweat bath."

Straight Walking Woman went herself, walking across the camp in the heat, to call each of the seven men to come to Sitting Bear's tipi the next morning. Then she and her sister-wives went down to the creek and began cutting willows. They dug holes and set the butt ends of the larger branches in them; then they drew the upper ends together and tied them firmly with yucca leaves. They wove withes (willow twigs) in and out among the uprights. They dug a pit outside the lodge in which they built a small fire to heat the stones. The women even covered the lodges with robes so as to have everything ready at daylight. Because of their big giveaway, the women had to borrow some of the robes they used for coverings.

Early, early in the morning Sitting Bear was awake. He took his pipe and went outside with it to greet the Sun. He was standing before his tipi, praying, when the other priests began to arrive.

Behind each man walked his sister guardian. Sometimes the women really were blood sisters of the priests; sometimes the duties had been handed down from father to son, and mother to daughter, for so long a time that the "brother" and "sister" were no longer related. When there was no ceremony to be performed, a man's wife cared for the bundle he guarded; but when there was a ceremony, his "sister" guardian came from her camp to assist him.

As each pair arrived, they entered Sitting Bear's tipi and hung their bundle from one of the poles; the first three sat on the north side of Sitting Bear's bundle, the others sat on the south. Each pair sat down beneath their bundle and waited. When they were all there, Sitting Bear spoke to them.

"My brothers and sisters," he began, "I have called you together to help me. Sometime each summer we are supposed to open these bundles and clean them with prayer, but since that man who led us all died (he meant Little Bluff, but he did not dare to say his name), we have no one left who knows all the songs and prayers of the opening ceremony. For that reason, we cannot hold it now, not until one of us has visited all the other camps and learned all the parts of the ceremony that each of us knows."

Sitting Bear paused and looked around the tipi. "We can make prayers and offerings together, though," he resumed, "and that is why I have called you all here together. I want you to join with me in a sweat bath and in a prayer for all the young men who have gone out of this camp this summer. I want you to pray that they all come back to us safely, and that they can each count some war deeds in the place where they have gone."

There was a breath and stir of surprise around the tipi. Everybody had been pretty sure it was no hunting party that had left camp, but no one had said openly that it was a group bound for war. Now the secret was out in the open, and the priests all felt better.

"We did not want the white man in this camp to know what was going on," Sitting Bear continued, "and we still don't want him to know. We would like to tell it out to every Indian, but we can't even do that." Here and there around the tipi, someone nodded. "Now that you do know, all we can do is ask you, in the name of the Ten Grandmothers, to keep quiet and not to tell. We know we can trust you." Everybody nodded then.

"Now we will go out," Sitting Bear said, concluding his talk. He got up. His sister—his own sister—unfastened his bundle from the tipi pole and sliding her arms through the carrying straps on the sides of the bundle, set it on her back. The other women did the same.

All in line, following the oldest man, Running Buffalo, they went out of the tipi and down to the creek, where the sweat lodges were built, and where Sitting Bear's wives waited with their friends.

Each woman guardian led the way four times around the sweat lodge that she and her brother would use, from east to south to west to north to east again. On each round, she hesitated before the doorway and lifted the curtain of hide that was hanging over it, but she did not go in until the fourth round. The men followed the women into the sweat lodges.

Inside their lodge, Kills Navaho Woman hung the bundle from the center of the domed roof. She sat down on the south side of the lodge and slipped her blouse off her shoulders. Her long hair streamed down, hiding her body.

Sitting Bear, on the north, laid his robe back behind him. Under it, he wore nothing but his breechcloth. Beside each of them was a bundle of willow switches tied together with sage, a big bundle of sage—the

tall, white, man sage—and a brass bucket of water with a gourd dipper. They sat silently waiting, and then Straight Walking Woman reached through the doorway, balancing a red-hot lump of granite on a forked stick. She dropped the stone into the hole in the middle of the sweat-lodge floor, and followed it with three others.

Sitting Bear threw a dipper of water on the stones. It hissed to dryness, and Kills Navaho Woman followed with a second dipperful. Not until the fourth wetting were the stones cool enough to send clouds of steam into the lodge.

As soon as the steam rose around them, Sitting Bear and Kills Navaho Woman began to beat themselves with their willow switches. Their skins turned bright red with the heat and the pounding, and the sweat rolled off them like ants pouring out of a log. When the stones cooled and the steam grew less dense, Sitting Bear called out to Straight Walking Woman. She came into the lodge and took out the first stones, and then she returned with four more.

Four times they steamed and beat themselves, wiping themselves down with sage when the perspiration became too uncomfortable. The mingled smells of hot stones, drying willow, and crushed sage filled their nostrils. At last it was over; there was no more steam from the rocks, and they were ready to go out.

Kills Navaho Woman, staggering a little with weakness, took down the bundle and carried it four times around the inside of the lodge before she threw back the door curtain and led the way out. Straight Walking Woman had set a tripod on the south side of the door, and Kills Navaho Woman hung in its place the kidney-shaped rawhide package, so old that the painting on its surface had blurred to a dull brown and the design was hard to distinguish. The sweating had done the Grandmother good. The bundle looked fresher and cleaner than when it had been carried into the lodge.

There was a little water in the creek, and the bottom was gravelly, so they could bathe there. The women went upstream from the men to wash the last perspiration from their bodies before they went back to Sitting Bear's tipi. The water was warmish, but it felt cold on their skins. It was a good feeling, a refreshing feeling.

At Sitting Bear's tipi, the feast was laid out. There was some dried

meat, boiled with wild potatoes which the women had dug up. Eagle Boy had found a wild turkey's nest and brought in the eggs. Straight Walking Woman had rolled them in mud and roasted them in the coals. Eagle Boy and his sister had also hunted for terrapins to be roasted, and they had pulled prairie dogs out of their holes to be roasted in their skins in mud, like the eggs. They had gone back into a little ravine in the hillside and brought in fresh sumac berries, which White Shell Woman had crushed in with the last sugar in camp and stirred into buckets of water.

It was a poor man's feast of women's and children's gatherings because Sitting Bear had not had time to go hunting, and because the giveaway had left them all in need. No one said anything; they all ate the food and thanked the host, as if it had been the finest fat backs and smoked tongues anyone could offer them. Not to do so would have been impolite.

No one spoke except in thanks after the meal. They were all too tired from the long day's sweating and the days of heat that lay behind it. Quietly, their thanks spoken, the guests picked up their bundles and reverently carried them home.

Sitting Bear sat back in his place. There was nothing left for him to do. Now he had done everything. He had explained, in his silent prayers in the sweat lodge, that he had not dropped the knife on purpose, but that it had fallen into the fire by accident. He had told his Grandmother he would take the blame for the misfortune, and he had begged Her to keep his son safe.

He had already prayed to the Father Above and to our Mother, the Earth. In the Sun Dance, he had given away all he had in his son's honor and on his son's behalf. Now he sat in his tipi, an old man and poor, waiting for his son to return.*

Sitting in the tipi, like the bear he was named for, would accomplish nothing. He had women and children to feed and only one young

* The account of "sweating the Grandmothers" was given to me, through Mrs. Ioleta Hunt MacElhaney, by a Kiowa whose request that he remain anonymous is respected, although he has been dead for many years. He was, however, a well-informed person, of such a position that his description could be relied on.

man to hunt for them. He called White Shell Woman and told her, "We'd better be moving on. We need food and robes for the winter. That means going north until we find some buffaloes."

So they packed their camp and headed north, the drag horses moving easily, even in the heat, under their lightened loads. The first night, they came up with a camp of Cheyennes. Those people had been hunting for eight days and had found no buffaloes. And Cheyennes are good hunters. So the two groups joined forces and moved on.

The grass was brown and crisp; it crackled under the weight of the horses' feet. The red earth powdered them with its dust as impartially as it coated the leaves of the sunflowers and the trees. Several times they saw herds of antelope out on the roasting plains, and had good luck with them, but antelope hides would not give them winter robes.

On this trip, under the sponsorship of the friendly Cheyennes, they journeyed farther north than Sitting Bear had ever gone. Once they met a party of white soldiers, with their blue suits and brass buttons and wide hats. One man had a brass horn. He blew into it like a flute, and whenever he blew, the other soldiers got into line, or spread out, or galloped their horses, or got down and ate. It seemed to Sitting Bear like a good idea to have someone trained to give signals and the others to follow them. He remembered White Bear's bugle. Some Kiowa should learn to blow it.

Rains began about the end of August. Green began to come up through the parched brown on the prairies. The horses cropped it and stepped more lightly. All of a sudden, the nights were cool. People slept all night without turning. Sitting Bear gave the order, and he and his family said good-by to the Cheyennes and started home.

They came through the Cheyenne country without trouble, although they met another party of white men. These men were not soldiers, but teamsters; and they had wagons with high canvas covers, loaded with buffalo bones. They said, in sign language and a little Comanche, that they had gathered the bones from the prairies and were taking them to the iron road to be sent east.

Well, let them take the bones if they left him the buffaloes, Sitting Bear thought. And, as if to answer him, the next day buffaloes appeared, a large herd, drifting south. He hunted, and he was lucky. Soon the drag horses moved more slowly under their loads, and the children's

cheeks were rounding out with fresh fat. The women scolded joyfully about the amount of work Sitting Bear was making for them. They went on, always southward, following the herd, killing and butchering and drying the meat as they traveled, until they were back in their own country between Arrowhead River and Tipi Pole River, and about ready to settle into camp again.

Now they were meeting Kiowas, but no one had any news of Young Sitting Bear and his party. They had heard and seen nothing of the boys since the morning they'd ridden out of camp. Restlessly, Sitting Bear moved his family on, down to Edge of the Mountains Standing, and into the camp west of Kicking Bird's. He had no desire to be near that man, but if he were at the south end of the Kiowa country, instead of at the north, he might have his news a few days earlier.

Lone Wolf came and found him and camped nearby, and soon afterward, White Bear came. They, too, had had good luck hunting, and all three camps were rich again. In the evenings, they sat and smoked.

And now the waiting was not so long. Eight days later, they heard young men shouting west of the camps.

"Get ready!" Sitting Bear shouted. "Everybody get ready! They're coming in!"

"Do you hear crying?" Straight Walking Woman asked him, doubtfully.

"Crying?" No! I hear the young men shouting the victory!" Sitting Bear answered.

"I think I hear crying," Straight Walking Woman said, under her breath, but she went on getting the camp in order and her son's beautiful tipi set up, while the other women cooked for the home-coming feast. There was not another sound from the direction where they knew the young men must be gathered, waiting for the women to get everything in camp ready for them.

That in itself was unusual. More often than not, the young men sent out scouts and peeked and then ducked back into hiding, impatient to come in. Straight Walking Woman felt proud of her son. He must have the others in good control if they waited so quietly this way.

Sitting Bear got himself dressed and painted. White Shell Woman combed his hair and painted his part. He stood outside the tipi, with

a long red stone Sioux pipe in his hand, and waited for his sons to come home.

Big Tree rode into camp first, with the others bunched behind him. They were not shouting; they were not firing guns. They carried scalps, white men's scalps. They led two horses with empty saddles: Young Sitting Bear's and Young Lone Wolf's. The new gun hung uselessly in its painted case by Young Sitting Bear's saddle.

Sitting Bear looked for a long time at his favorite son's favorite horse. He gave his hand to his son's friends. He went into his tipi, and its flap dropped closed behind him. No one dared go forward to lift it, to go in to comfort Sitting Bear.



# CHAPTER TWELVE

## *CHIEF SITTING BEAR'S DECISION: 1870*

FOR FOUR DAYS, Sitting Bear remained shut up in his tipi. No one went in to see him. Straight Walking Woman set wooden bowls of food inside the door, and took them away untouched. If Sitting Bear went out at all, it was so late at night no one knew anything about it—so late that even Straight Walking Woman and White Shell Woman had dropped into the sleep of exhaustion.

When he came out after four days, early on the fifth morning, Sitting Bear was old, so old that it looked as if his ribs might cave in after any breath. His face was like a face carved on a stone pipe, and his voice, when he spoke, was an old man's voice.

"Saddle my horse, and call my friends to ride with me," he said. "I am going to bring my son home."

Straight Walking Woman went first to Lone Wolf's tent. There the women had cried their hearts out, and their faces were peaceful. The long black hair they had trimmed close to their heads in mourning had been gathered up from the ground. The scraps of flesh and the blood they had shed when they gashed their arms and legs were gone from sight. The women moved stiffly, but as if they had been relieved of a great weight.

Straight Walking Woman's own hair was shaved close to her skull,

but she had not cut herself. Long ago, when her mother died, she wanted to, but Sitting Bear had stopped her. "Making yourself ugly will not help the dead," he said. "Let your beauty be the same as ever when your hair grows out." So, although she knew people would think she was acting strangely, Straight Walking Woman had not cut herself or let her sister-wives deface themselves.

"Where is Lone Wolf?" Straight Walking Woman asked his wives.

"Inside the tipi," one of the women answered.

"Please ask him to come out. My husband wants to see him."

A moment later, Lone Wolf was beside her. "What is it? What does my friend want?" he asked. Lone Wolf, too, looked like one who had grieved and been released from his first pain.

"Come to his tipi," Straight Walking Woman said as she turned and ran for Big Tree and White Bear. She had never been so frightened in her life.

White Bear started for Sitting Bear's camp, and Straight Walking Woman walked back with Big Tree. Big Tree was solid and quiet; he never talked much. He was Straight Walking Woman's uncle, and she was comforted by having him near by.

At the camp, Sitting Bear had had the tipi flaps thrown open and was sitting in the place of honor, with his friends beside him. His beautifully painted pipe bag lay on the ground in front of him, with a carved red stone pipe beside it. His eyes were down, and he neither spoke nor moved until Big Tree had entered the tipi and seated himself.

"Thank you for coming, my friends," Sitting Bear said, and paused, as if he hardly knew how to go on. "I have sent for you to ask a favor," he finally continued. "You all know how much I loved my son. One of you loved his own boy as much as I did mine. I don't know about my friend, but I do know that I cannot live without my son, close, at my side."

"What are you going to do?" White Bear asked in a strange, choking voice.

"I am going to bring my son home," Sitting Bear said calmly. "I am going to the place where he fought and where he is buried, and bring him back with me." He motioned through the open door to White Shell Woman. "Call your son," Sitting Bear instructed her. "I want him here to listen."

Eagle Plume soon came. He wore an old plain breechcloth and a pair of old moccasins. His face was smeared with wood ashes, and his hair had been cut, to show that he was in mourning. He stood inside the tipi door, waiting for his father to speak.

"Sit down," said Sitting Bear. He turned to Big Tree. "Tell us what happened." He passed the pipe to Big Tree, binding him to tell the truth and nothing else.

"It was this way," Big Tree began. "We rode east, as you warned us to. Two days we went east, to be sure that we were safe, before we turned south. We rode south along the west line of Cross Timbers."

"That was right," Sitting Bear nodded.

"On our way, we saw deer and smaller game—squirrels and rabbits and prairie dogs. We killed some; we needed food, and wanted to save our dried meat and mesquite meal for an emergency. We were all riding together, now one ahead, and now another. My brother-friend was the leader of the party, but it was too soon to send out scouts, or break into groups."

"I would have done the same thing," Sitting Bear agreed.

"It was good, that part of it," said Big Tree. He was silent a moment, savoring the youngness and the freedom and the companionship he had left behind him forever at the end of that ride. Then he resumed. "We went on below River That Runs Red, four days south of the river, and then we turned more to the west. We were riding to see the country, as much as anything."

All the men in the tipi nodded. They all remembered doing the same thing. Straight Walking Woman slid into the tipi and set down bowls of food and wooden spoons, and slid out again. Nobody noticed her, but first Big Tree, and then White Bear, and finally Lone Wolf and Sitting Bear, picked up their spoons and began to eat.

"We were gone two moons," Big Tree went on, between bites. He sipped broth from his spoon. "We went a long way southwest, till we came to the Broken Mountains. We stopped there, on the south slope of one of them, where there was grass for the horses and a little stream. It was beginning to get cold at night."

"Time to start back," said White Bear.

"My brother-friend sent out scouts in the morning, and they came back at night."

"Which way did they go?" Sitting Bear asked. He pushed the bowl of food away from his as if he were suddenly sickened from looking at it.

"They went east, around the curve of the mountains, and back to the north."

"That was risky, letting themselves be cut off from the rest of you."

"They came back safe, though, in the evening. It was just as the new moon was rising. They said there was a company of white men, with *wo-haws* (steers), camped on the other side of the hill. My brother-friend told us to get things ready. We could kill the men and run off the beef. Before it was daylight, we started."

"Go on," ordered Sitting Bear, and his voice, like his face, was stone.

"We scouted around the east end of the mountain, and could see their fires and hear their voices. They were up, getting ready to start their cattle moving. My brother-friend and his friend—" he looked away from Lone Wolf, "were all painted. They had on their trailing scarves, and they had their staking spears and their guns. They were shouting, and singing that song you gave them before they left." His voice dropped for a moment.

"The Empty Saddles Song," said Sitting Bear without any expression. "Go on."

"They dropped off their horses and staked themselves. They began firing their guns. The rest of us rode up behind them, with our bows and arrows. But the white men had guns, too. Afterward, we found one of them. It was the same gun your son had, the Springfield Seventy. The white man shot them both."

"How did he die, the white man?"

"I stabbed him. My lance was short, but it was long enough to go right through him."

"Why did you not release your friends?"

"None of us could reach them in time. The white man was too quick with his gun."

Sitting Bear was silent for a long time, and nobody else moved or spoke. "Could you find the place again?" he eventually asked Big Tree.

"Oh, yes. I know that I could find it."

"Could you lead us there?"

"If you wanted to go."

"I am going. I am going to find my son and bring him home."

Sitting Bear turned to Lone Wolf. "There is your son, too," he reminded his friend. "Will you come with me to find them?"

Lone Wolf hesitated. "I will come with you," he said slowly. "But my son is not there. I cannot bring him home. My son has gone somewhere else, and what is left is nothing of him. I will come with you because of the friendship between us and between our two boys. But I cannot bring my son home."

Sitting Bear looked around the tipi at his other friends. "And the rest of you?" he asked. "Will the rest of you go with us?"

"Why go?" White Bear demanded. "This is a wrong thing to do, a bad thing. On the last night of Sun Dance, an owl flew over your camp—I heard it myself. You were warned that evil would come to you. Perhaps for a reason that only some of us know." He stopped speaking. "Perhaps for some other reason, there is a curse on this camp. If you bring back your son's bones, you will spread the curse to all the Kiowas."

Sitting Bear did not move. "You will not come with me, then?" he asked.

"I will not go with you to do this dangerous thing, but I will ride with you as far as the last night's camp, if you ask me to. These boys were Gourd Dancers. I said, and all the Kiowas heard me, that I would take the load from all the Gourd Dancers if there were trouble."

"How will you get back if you won't ride with us beyond the last night's camp?"

"I can ride one day ahead of you, with some of the other Gourd Dancers."

"What about you, Big Tree?"

Big Tree spoke, slowly, as he always did. "I will go with you. Perhaps on the way you will change your mind. But whether you change or not, I am your friend and your wife's uncle. I will go with you."

"All right, then," said Sitting Bear. "Now listen to me, all of you. We are not going to war. We are not going to fight. We are only going to bring my son home, so he will know that he is still welcome here, and in his mother's tipi." He looked at the door, and saw Straight Walking Woman and White Shell Woman standing just outside it. "Get everything ready," Sitting Bear directed them. "We are going to ride out and bring our son home. My best clothes, his best clothes, our best horses—everything. Set up his tipi and get a big feast ready for the

Gourd Dancers so they can welcome him when he comes back. Do all these things, and our family will be together again."

One at a time, Sitting Bear's friends got up and left the tipi, leaving him sitting there with his red stone pipe. He could hear them outside, talking.

"It's all wrong," White Bear said. "When a man dies, he is dead. Kiowas mourn for him, and then they feel better and can go on living. Sitting Bear should change his name. That boy's name should never be spoken again."

"Hush and be quiet," Straight Walking Woman said clearly. "How do you know how he feels? Perhaps his grief is so great that he wants the evil spirits to kill him. Had you thought of that?"

"Let him kill himself, then," said White Bear stubbornly. "I can understand that a man might want to die strongly enough to kill himself. It's happened before. But he can fall over on his spear, or hang himself with a tipi rope, or get killed fighting—that's his business, and nobody else gets hurt."

"This is his business, too," said Straight Walking Woman levelly. "This was my son. I am as much afraid of the dead as you are. But whatever happens, I will have to live with my husband and whatever he brings back. If there is a curse, I will be cursed, too. If this is the way he chooses to mourn, I will mourn with him, no matter how afraid I am."

"He should burn the tipi and kill the horse," White Bear persisted. "He should not bring those bones back to the tribe. He will put a curse on us all. He has no right to put everyone else in danger."

"We are in danger, now," agreed Lone Wolf, speaking suddenly. "There are white men all around us, wherever we travel. They are killing our buffaloes and all the other game. If they go on, we will starve to death. It is just as bad to have Kicking Bird so friendly with them that he tells them what happens in all the other camps, and even brings one to the Sun Dance. We can't go on this way, inviting more trouble."

"Then stay at home with the women and children," Straight Walking Woman taunted him.

"I will go," said Lone Wolf, his voice heavy with tiredness. "My friend is not himself; his heart and mind have changed. I will go with him to protect him. Somebody must take care of him while he is on

his way. But I cannot do what he is doing. My own son is gone, but I cannot bring him back."

"Come on," Big Tree said. "Let's call out the Gourd Dancers, and all of us get ready to leave. I suppose we'll ride out tomorrow morning at daybreak."

Their voices stopped, and their footsteps died away. Sitting Bear still sat, without moving, in the back of his tipi.



# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## *JOURNEY WITH THE DEAD: 1870*

WHEN SITTING BEAR LED the Gourd Dancers out of camp four days later, it was like the great Sun Dance procession when the priest took the Taime from band to band. White Bear rode beside him, and the young men followed them. The other societies rode with the group for half a day's journey to the south, all the men dressed in their finest clothes or their society regalia. Some had feathered lances, and some had fur-covered, beaded spears. All the men were painted, and so were most of the horses. Sitting Bear had his son's gun slung by his saddle horn.

Although the camp was set facing east, like any ordinary camp, the men galloped around it from the east, as they would around a Sun Dance camp circle. The women came out and watched them and whooped for them, and the boys and old men who were to stay to guard the camp stood and watched, too. They were all—men on horseback and onlookers on the ground—singing the "Journey Song," the glad, gay song of young men riding out in the spring of the world:

*Going away on a journey,*
*That's the thing to do.*
*That's the best way for a young man*
*To make himself rich and famous!*

Sitting Bear, leading the procession, tapped the beat of the song with his finger against the stock of his son's gun. The ammunition pouch hanging at his side was heavy. Young Sitting Bear had fired few shots in his lifetime. His father had not counted the remaining cartridges, but he knew there were plenty of them. He fired the gun in the air, and pushed his horse into a gallop for the last round of the camp. Then he pulled down to a walk, as they went out onto the open prairies.

Straight Walking Woman rode behind him, leading Young Sitting Bear's horse loaded with everything her son had valued. It was a beautiful horse, fine-boned and blue-coated. The Mexican from whom Sitting Bear had bought it called it a *grullo*. The horse's narrow delicate head was up, and its nostrils had flared with the excitement of the ride and the shouting and shooting. On the withers and shoulders, the horse was painted with yellow hands—yellow for the Gourd Dancers, and an open hand for friendship.

Now they began going south, steadily, across the River That Runs Red, down through the open country, over the white rocks that broke into tables and plateaus, on, steadily southward, day after day, till they saw the Broken Mountains ahead of them, but to the west. Sitting Bear had put his gun away when they left the camp and had ridden all the rest of the way with a piece of white cloth tied to his spear, to show any white men they might meet that they were a peace party.

They took their time about the trip. Straight Walking Woman, White Shell Woman, and Lone Wolf's wife, Broken Song, were with them to do the cooking. The party went into camp early each evening, and they let their cooking fires show. Each evening Straight Walking Woman set up her son's yellow-painted tipi, and each evening Sitting Bear settled himself at the back of the tipi, north of his son's place of honor, and invited the Gourd Dancers to come in and smoke with him. Eagle Plume sat on the other side of his brother's empty place.

Twice they met parties of white men driving cattle north. White Bear wanted to charge them and get some of the *wo-haws*, but Sitting Bear stopped him. They were a peace party, he reminded White Bear, and they must meet all men peacefully.

White Bear grumbled to Big Tree. "I don't understand anything about it," he said. "He wants to break every rule the Kiowas have. He's looking for his son's bones to bring them home, and he's celebrating

as if his son were getting married. He won't let us take revenge. Believe me, if it had been my son, some white men would know how I felt by now."

"We'll have to fight them sooner or later," Big Tree assented. "Maybe he'll feel differently on the way back."

"I hope so," said White Bear. "I won't be with you then, of course. I'm not going to travel with any old bones."

In the morning they turned west, toward the Broken Mountains, riding across the dusty autumn earth, slowly, without singing. They saw where cattle had passed over the ground, leaving trails as wide as wagon trails, and they crossed a wagon trail, too, going north, parallel to the cattle trails. Game trails were few, only those made by antelope spiraling around the hills.

This was the twenty-first day of slow riding. The young men had made it in two moons, allowing for their swerve to the east and back again, although they had ridden harder and faster. Traveling as if they were a camp with women and children, Sitting Bear had still led the party at a good pace, and they had covered a lot of ground.

Before they broke camp that morning, he sent for Big Tree. "Where are we?" Sitting Bear asked.

"One day's ride east," Big Tree replied. He pointed ahead with his lips. "See there, where the mountain curves northward? In the curve there is the place where we fought the white men. A stream comes down out of the rocks, and the rocks are broken. There aren't real caves, but holes scooped out of the hillside, open to the north. We left him there in one of them, with the open side walled up with rocks and his friend lying beside him."

"Can you find the place?" Sitting Bear demanded.

"Oh, yes, any of us who rode with him knows the place."

"Then you lead." Sitting Bear waved Big Tree forward, and dropped back to speak to White Bear. "One day's ride," said Sitting Bear. "We part here. Go on, any way you think it is best to go. We will come back to the Big Bend of Tipi Pole River and make our winter camp there again this year."

"Good," said White Bear. "I think I'll camp on the south side of Saddle Mountain."

"That's near the soldiers, and near Kicking Bird."

"I'll risk them," White Bear responded grimly. Sitting Bear did not answer him. He called out like a camp crier.

"Come here, all of you. Everybody come here."

They all grouped around him.

"We have come to a dividing place," said Sitting Bear. "Our friend, White Bear, is going north from here, back to our own country. My family and I are going west, to do what we came to do. You are all free to choose which way you will go, north or west. This is no quarrel between White Bear and me; we part in peace, like friends, and those of you who go with him will still be my friends. It's up to you to make your own decision."

There were a few who hesitated, but the party divided quickly. Most of them went to White Bear's side of the camp. It was a very small party which stayed with Sitting Bear: Lone Wolf and Big Tree, Eagle Plume and Straight Walking Woman and White Shell Woman, and Broken Song, and young Packing Rocks. White Bear's party was loaded up and ready to start. They all shook hands, and White Bear mounted his horse.

"We ride for revenge!" White Bear shouted. He wheeled his horse northward, and he and his party cantered away.

"We ride for peace," Sitting Bear said, very quietly, to the few who remained with him. Then he, too, turned his horse, this time to the west, and they rode steadily to the mountains.

The mountains' shadow swallowed them late in the afternoon. Sitting Bear pulled his horse to a stop. "We'll get down here," he said. "Make an overnight camp," he directed his wives. "In the morning will be the time to go and greet our son."

The women put up the tipi, but this evening Sitting Bear did not go into it. He sat in the shadow of the Broken Mountains, with the twilight blue around him like a lake, and looked to the north, to his own country. "It will be good to start back home," he said to Eagle Plume, beside him. Sitting Bear had never looked so old.

They were up early. They left the camp, with the tipi standing and a stick propped across the door to show that they were away but would be back. Eagle Plume rode beside his father into the cove on the north

side of the mountains. They found the little stream; they found the broken ground. Big Tree raised his riding crop, and pointed up to a row of rocks placed differently from the other rocks on the hillside.

"Up there," he said.

Sitting Bear signaled them to get down. They dropped the lines, and the horses stood, waiting. "Give me my son's good blanket," Sitting Bear directed.

White Shell Woman brought the red-and-blue blanket she had made from the materials bought in the trading post in May—a hundred Mays ago. She handed it to Sitting Bear.

From his own pack, Sitting Bear took his carved red stone pipe, his tobacco bag, and a bag of crumbled cedar sprigs. He unfastened a roll behind his saddle and took out cedar sticks. "Come with me, all of you," he said.

Steadily they worked their way up the hillside. Sometimes a rock slipped or rolled underfoot, but Sitting Bear never stopped climbing, and never looked back to see if the others were following him. He could hear them there, hear their hard breathing and their slipping feet on the stones. One of the women was crying, a soft little whimper like a tired child's. He hoped it was not Straight Walking Woman, but he could not stop to give comfort now.

There was a little shelf in front of the bluff shelter and outside the rock wall. Sitting Bear motioned to Eagle Plume to help him. They lifted the stones away one at a time, setting them aside to be used again. The others stood and waited, behind them.

When the opening was clear, Sitting Bear built a fire on the ground before it with his cedar sticks. He filled and lighted his pipe, and passed it around. Even the women smoked it.

"Father Above," Sitting Bear prayed, "You know that my son who is lying inside there was dearer to me than my life, or Your light. You know that he was a good boy, that he never hurt anyone. Only good went with him, and only good can come from him. Father Above, let me take my son home safely with me. Let no harm come to any of my family or friends. I am a dead man walking, already. If there is to be pain, if there is to be sorrow, let it come to me. Thank You, Father. *Aho*!"

The tears ran down his face; he could see through them, but the fire

and everything around him was blurred. Sitting Bear sprinkled cedar sprigs on the fire and motioned to them all to smoke themselves as he did. Then, when they had all been blessed and protected and purified by the smoke, he spread the red-and-blue blanket out on the ground. Alone, he went into the bluff shelter.

It was easy for him to tell his son's bones from the other's. Big Tree had laid his brother-friend's shield on top of him. Under the shield were only bones; no flesh was left. But the bear claw lay under his head, as if it were still tied to his scalp lock. Perhaps the mice had been there, but if they had, nothing was disarranged.

Sitting Bear lifted the bones, one at a time. He talked to them, welcoming his favorite son back home. He caressed each bone, then painted it yellow, and passed it through the cedar smoke before he laid it on the red-and-blue blanket in the cave opening. He did the same thing with the bear claw, and laid it on the blanket.

At last it was all over. Every bone had been gathered and prepared for travel. Sitting Bear folded the beautiful blanket into a pack, and swung it onto his own shoulders. Straight Walking Woman stepped forward to help him, but he waved her back. What he was doing, he was doing; he did not ask the others to do it for him.

Eagle Plume and Lone Wolf, working quickly, put the stones back in place before the opening of the cave. Lone Wolf, too, was crying, and Eagle Plume looked as if he could not swallow the stone in his throat. When they had finished their work, the fire was out, and Sitting Bear led the way back down the slope, stooping under his burden.

The horses waited where their riders had left them, the lines still dragging on the ground. Young Sitting Bear's was saddled like the rest, and now Sitting Bear unloaded his pack and lashed it into the saddle. The *grullo* moved restlessly; he was not a pack horse and not used to being loaded. Then he quieted as Sitting Bear took the reins and held them while he mounted his own horse, swinging into the saddle from the right. His horse had never been ridden by a white man.

They turned away, and rode back to the tipi. Once Sitting Bear looked back over his shoulder. "The saddle is no longer empty," he said, aloud, to himself.

At the tipi, Sitting Bear dismounted. Straight Walking Woman took his sorrel's lines and held both horses while Sitting Bear unloaded

the *grullo*. He carried the pack into the tipi and set it in the place of honor, with the blanket laid open so they all could see the bones.

"My son invites you to smoke with him," he said to Lone Wolf and Big Tree.

Both men drew back, raising their hands in protest.

"What's the matter?" Sitting Bear demanded. "I told you I was going to bring my son home to live with us again. Now he has joined us, he asks you to smoke with him." He held out his great carved pipe, and moved toward them, first to Lone Wolf and then to Big Tree. He touched their hands with the pipe. Now they could not refuse. "Come in," Sitting Bear said, and led the way into the tipi. The women stared after him, shaking a little. Eagle Plume looked at his mothers, and followed his father inside.*

* The account of Sitting Bear's vow, of the journey to his son's burial place, of his difference of opinion with White Bear, and of the fulfillment of the vow, was told to me by Eagle Plume, in 1935. The horror of taboo violation was as strong to him then as it had been in 1870, when the event took place, and the effect of this episode on Kiowa history would be hard to exaggerate. The journey was from the Wichita Mountains north of Lawton, Oklahoma, to the Davis Mountains in Jeff Davis County, Texas—roughly a thousand miles.



# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## *AND THEN THE BUFFALOES WERE GONE: 1871*

THE YEAR HAD ROUNDED its full cycle. Thirteen months had passed since the last time Sitting Bear and his family had set their camp within the big bend of the Tipi Pole River. Then they had been rich; now they were poor. There was enough to eat in camp, and enough to feed a guest, but nothing left over.

Poverty was not important; a man could always get more. Or at least that was the way things had been, ever since there had been Kiowas. But now there was a change. Nowhere could they find any buffaloes, and people could not live forever on deer meat and skinny antelopes.

Sitting Bear hunted as he had not hunted for years. With Eagle Plume he rode to the Black Shiny Hills, west of them, two days' journey. They gathered salt on the Salt Plains on their way back. They had to have something to show for the trip. A day or two later they rode south, to take the salt to Kicking Bird's camp, to trade.

Kicking Bird's camp looked like a town. There were many brush arbors, and shelter walls were built around all the tipis. The children were fat, and most of the people were dressed in cloth.

"Why are you here?" Kicking Bird asked Sitting Bear when they were smoking after supper.

"We came to trade for whatever we can get."

"You? You came to trade?" Kicking Bird's astonishment showed plainly.

Sitting Bear was as proud as he had been rich.

"Your children are fat and healthy," he said. "In my camp, we are all lean. How do you find game to feed so many people?"

"We don't live on game alone. Some of the women made gardens last summer. That was why only a few of us came to Sun Dance; they had to stay here and take care of the plants. And then when we need meat, we go to the fort."

Kicking Bird jerked with his chin to the south. "Down there, where the trading post and the stone corral are," he continued, "the soldiers have put many more buildings. Some where they live, and some where they store things. It is big now."

"Why do they have it there? No one has ever told me why."

"To protect the white farmers."

"Protect them from whom?"

"From us. And then, they protect us from the white farmers. The soldiers are there to keep things peaceful."

Once Sitting Bear would have laughed out loud. Even now, he smiled a little. "The fighting men have come into our country, where no one wants them, to keep things peaceful?"

Kicking Bird nodded stubbornly. "That's right. Here we have no trouble with the farmers. They stay where they are, and so do we. And the soldiers are here to see that no one makes trouble. It's like the Gourd Dancers. When it is peacetime, they are police to make sure everything stays all right. But when there is war, they fight."

Sitting Bear dropped the subject. "What do you trade them to get the meat?"

"Land for the white men to settle on, that's all."

"That's all!"

"That's all. There's plenty of land, enough for everybody."

"Not when the people who live on it kill the buffaloes to make pasture for the *wo-haws,* and put fences around it to keep man and animals out, and shoot whoever comes near them."

"There's still a lot of land," Kicking Bird insisted.

"Not when it is torn open to make gardens and raise crops. Not

when they are putting stone buildings all over it. Not when more people come to live on it than our Mother the Earth has ever fed. There is not enough land, and there never will be!"

Kicking Bird was quiet, thinking things over. At last he said, "In your own song, you say you will not live forever. Only the sun, the moon, and the earth will always remain. It is that way with a man's life and with the way men live. Once, a long time ago, we made brush tipis, not hide ones. We had no horses, only dogs. Our women cooked with hot stones in holes in the ground, not in buckets. Now we remember those things only when we think of the tales our grandfathers told. Isn't that true? The Kiowas have changed their ways a lot of times."

"Those were changes for the better."

"Perhaps it is changing for the better to take some of the white man's ways. One horse hitched to a wagon can carry four drag horses' loads. You feed only the one."

"Until your white friends came, we didn't have to worry about how many horses we fed! The earth was good, and all the horses could graze. We could move from pasture to pasture whenever we needed to."

"If we stay in one place, we can live on our gardens and raise our own *wo-haws* for meat. Our children can go to school."

Sitting Bear held himself in. He dared not look at Eagle Plume, and he knew his son's eyes turned away from him. "That was how it started," he said, when he could speak steadily. "Tamma came to your camp. He talked to you as sweetly as a young man talks to a girl he is courting. And you believed him. Now you would turn your own people into prisoners."

"Not prisoners. I want them to have plenty of food all the year round. I want everyone to be fed. The buffaloes are going. The white men have asked me to invite all the chiefs to come to the fort and talk to them about a treaty."

"We made a treaty two years ago, up there on Medicine Lodge Creek. What do we want with another?"

"To agree about territory—where we will go and where we won't go."

"They came here without being invited," said Sitting Bear. "They push the other tribes from the east and north in on us. They tell us over and over again what we can and can't do. Now they want us to meet with them and agree where we won't go on our own land. And

you carry the message, like a war party's servant! You are no more a man than that!" His voice jerked with anger.

"Look," said Kicking Bird, and his voice, too, was unsteady. "The white men are stronger than we are. They have guns like ours, and they have little guns they can hide in their clothes and that never stop firing. And then they have guns so big they have horses to pull them. You have seen those. We can't fight all that. Better to go with them and be sure of food in the camps."

Sitting Bear rose and pulled his blanket around him.

"My camp isn't hungry yet," he said. "I can find other Wichitas to trade with. No Kiowa should talk like that!"

Will you meet with the white men, and talk with them, next summer?"

"I'll think about it. I'm leaving here, now."

Sitting Bear and Eagle Plume got their horses from the little stick-fenced pasture behind Kicking Bird's tipi, and rode out of camp. The night was black around them, lit only by the white sparks of the stars over their heads. The wind that rumpled the horses' manes was chill, from the north. Somewhere back along the creek, the owls were talking incessantly.

"There are always owls on that creek," Sitting Bear said. "They don't mean anything to us. If anyone is hurt, it will be the people who live there."

Eagle Plume did not answer. They rode carefully, for fear the horses should stumble. Without even thinking of what they were doing, they turned west at the next creek and made a camp for the night. In the morning, they went on west and found a Wichita village where they could trade their salt for corn and dried pumpkins.

It was an upset winter. People kept coming and going. Sometimes the camp was large and sometimes it was small. The people came and went everywhere. Cheyennes and Arapahos drifted down from the north. Pueblos came from New Mexico on the west. Shawnees and Sauk and Fox came through the Cross Timbers on the east. Once, Quanah Parker and a wild party of his young Comanches boiled up from the south and begged Sitting Bear to join them in a raid on the fort. Sitting Bear listened and shook his head. "You can't run them out that way," he said. "The thing to do is not go near them, starve them out."

"They bring their wagons across through the Timbers, loaded with food and supplies," Quanah answered. "We'll have to drive them out; we can't starve them."

But Sitting Bear only shook his head and the Comanches, having eaten everything in sight, went on their way.

The next party to come into camp was White Bear's. Most of the Gourd Dancers were with him, and they did bring meat. Everyone shared, and for once they had a feast, not a meal where you counted each bite you ate.

"Where have you been?" Sitting Bear asked, after the food had vanished.

"Texas," White Bear answered, filling his pipe. He leaned back and smoked slowly. "We went east of the Broken Mountains, near a big town. There was a man out herding, and we got him."

"Horses?" Sitting Bear asked interestedly.

"Not horses and not *wo-haws*," White Bear replied. "It was a new kind of animal, not as tall as a deer, and round like a bear, and covered with grey thick fur. They had split hooves, like deer. We killed the man, and his creatures scattered. Then his big yellow dog got after them and rounded them up. We killed some of them, but you couldn't eat the meat if you were starving, it smelled so of grease."

"Hmm." Sitting Bear shook his head. "Now they are bringing in new animals. I'd like to have seen that dog."

White Bear jerked his chin toward his tent. "You can see him. I brought him back with me. A dog like that is good; he can already herd the horses."

"How do they teach him, I wonder?"

"I don't know. But he can herd any kind of animal. He's worth as much as a man, any day."

"What else did you do?"

"We burned a farm and took away the women and children. We traded them to the Comanches, later. We have all we can do to feed our own women, who know how to work."

"The white men will be angry about that. They will get after us all."

"Let them! We can fight them! My young men are always ready to fight. You're getting so you sit around like Kicking Bird."

Sitting Bear glanced over his shoulder at the fine yellow tipi, in the

center of camp, where his son's bones rested. "Call your young men together tomorrow at noon. My son wants to give a feast for them." White Bear should see how he honored his favored son.

White Bear was uneasy. "I don't know whether they'll come. I heard from Big Tree that your son is with you. I could hardly get them to come into this camp at all after that. They scouted it to make sure that tipi was closed before they came in."

"Tomorrow, at noon, the tipi will be open. My son invites his society to feast with him. Tell your young men that. Call them to feast with him."

White Bear got reluctantly to his feet. He had smoked with Sitting Bear, never thinking that this might come. Now he had to call the Gourd Dancers, and they would have to come, whether they wanted to or not.

"You're crazy," he said to Sitting Bear. "And your craziness will kill us all. Maybe you aren't afraid, but everyone else is. Why don't you go and pitch your camp alone? Be a lonely band family again?"

"I haven't asked anyone to camp with me," Sitting Bear replied. "Perhaps I am a little crazy—crazy with grief. My son was my heart, and when he went, I died. Now I am only waiting to join him. You can leave my camp tomorrow—right after the feast."

They went into the tipi when the chill spring sun stood directly overhead. Young Sitting Bear's bones rested on a willow-rod bed at the west side of the tipi, spread out on the red-and-blue blanket. Straight Walking Woman and her sister-wives served the food, and Sitting Bear sat with his guests. The Gourd Dancers were healthy young men with good appetites, but they were not hungry today. Sitting Bear kept urging food on them, but even so, half of it was carried out.

The meal was over and the pipe was going around, with Sitting Bear smoking for his son, when they heard noise and confusion outside. White Bear got up.

"Something's gone wrong in the camp," he declared. "Come with me, Gourd Dancers. We can't even wait to smoke when the police are needed." He led the way quickly out of the tipi. All the others pushed after him. After a moment, Sitting Bear tapped the still-burning tobacco out of his pipe into the fire, and rose.

"Pardon me, my son," he said. "I think I hear the white men."

Outside, there was running and chasing. The white soldiers had ridden into camp, and the women were pulling the children back out of the way, while the Gourd Dancers were going up and down, trying to quiet the people and get everything under control. White Bear stood facing the soldier chief and Kicking Bird, who rode beside the white man.

"He says there has been another raid into Texas," Kicking Bird was saying as Sitting Bear came up. "They think it must have been Kiowas."

"The Comanches are always going that way," Sitting Bear said, before White Bear could get any words out.

"He thought maybe somebody from this camp had gone there."

"Nobody who belongs to this camp has raided anywhere," Sitting Bear said carefully.

"What about people who don't belong to the camp?" Kicking Bird asked.

"What they do is their own affair."

The white soldier chief spoke, and pointed. One of the Gourd Dancers had a new little many-fire gun hanging from his belt. "He wants to know where that man got that," Kicking Bird reported.

"I don't know. He is a visitor here. I don't ask my guests where they get things. That's their business."

"He's a Gourd Dancer, isn't he?" Kicking Bird asked White Bear.

"Yes, he's one of my young men," said White Bear.

"Maybe you'd better get down, and we can talk things over," Sitting Bear suggested. "Come with me." He motioned to the white man, who swung down the left side of his horse and followed Sitting Bear through the camp to the yellow tipi.

The others trooped along behind them. Sitting Bear had been sure that they would, just as he had been sure that White Bear would say too much if they let him get started talking. "Come into my son's tipi," Sitting Bear invited with a courteous gesture, and Kicking Bird and the white man went inside.

When Kicking Bird realized that he really was in Sitting Bear's son's tipi, and that Young Sitting Bear was there too, his face faded to grey. He turned to get out and bumped into the white man. They stood,

holding onto one another to keep from falling down, while Sitting Bear went past them and covered the bones. He sat down on the willow bed beside his son.

"You saw him," he told Kicking Bird. "I went to Texas to bring my son home. I went in peace and came in peace; I hurt nobody. My friends went with me, but some of them turned back before we came to the place where my son was—waiting for me."

"I turned back and took my young men with me," White Bear said. "I went in peace, but I came back fighting."

"Which of you was the leader?" Kicking Bird asked, after he had consulted with the white man.

"I was the leader of the peace party," Sitting Bear replied. He looked closely at the white man. "He's a young man," he observed, "and there are no stars on his shoulders. The white man we talked to before was a chief. He was older, and he wore stars. Tell this little young man I am a chief, and I talk to chiefs, not to boys."

Kicking Bird must have changed the meaning of some of the words when he translated, for the white man did not get angry.

"He says all right, you can talk to the chief," he told Sitting Bear. "Come to the fort, and the chief will talk to you there."

For a moment, Sitting Bear was about to protest. The white man had found him; he had not looked for the white man. Then he gave up. There was no sense in arguing.

"Tell him to go back to the post," he said. "I will come when I have gathered my friends. He and his chief can wait there for me."

"What are you thinking about?" White Bear demanded. "Are you willing to give up? Why don't you fight?"

"Perhaps, after this talk at the fort, we will be ready to fight," said Sitting Bear. "But we ought to find out first who it is that we're fighting."

"I don't think so," White Bear protested.

"I am going," said Sitting Bear. "You can go with me in peace, if you want to."

"If you don't," said Kicking Bird, "they will send out more soldiers and more soldiers, and they will drive you in. They have already done that with Quanah and the Comanches. It's better to go freely than to be driven like cattle, isn't it?"

"Freely!" White Bear exclaimed bitterly. "Freely!"

"We went to Texas freely, and we came back freely," said Sitting Bear. "Perhaps we can work out an agreement so we can still move around our own country. Tell him to camp to the north," he went on, to Kicking Bird. "The women will feed him. How many are there with you?"

"Only two others, and we have our own food."

"In my camp, you eat mine," said Sitting Bear, and sent Eagle Plume to tell the women to start cooking.

Next day, the white men left to tell the soldier chief at the fort that Sitting Bear and his band were coming.



# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## *THE CAPTURE OF SITTING BEAR AND THE CHIEFS: 1871*

THEY RODE SOUTH, to Stinking Water Creek, across the prairies studded with the star flowers of May. The horses stepped lightly, for it was spring again and pasture was rich, and the creeks ran full of fresh water. The wind ran and played among the fringes of the women's sleeves and the feathers of the men's lances like a child or a young colt. All over the Mountains Standing was soft green, and there was welcome water cress in the creek again.

Sitting Bear rode past Kicking Bird's camp as if it were not there, and the others followed him. They went on to the fort, where the tight square of tight square stone buildings blocked in a patch of grass, with a flagpole in its center. White men in blue uniforms came and went, and Sitting Bear drew rein and waited for something to happen.

Presently the young man who had come to his camp emerged from one of the buildings, looked for a moment at Sitting Bear and his people, and then called to another white man, who hurried off. The young man came over and offered his hand to Sitting Bear, who touched it with his own palm.

Presently the other man came back with Wood Smoke, who had been an orphan boy, wandering from camp to camp wherever people would feed him, since Eagle Plume was small. Now he was dressed in pieces of uniforms and wore an old, torn hat.

"He says, 'Get down,' " Wood Smoke said to Sitting Bear.

"What are you doing here?" Sitting Bear demanded.

"I have to eat," Wood Smoke answered. "Nobody taught me to hunt, and I never had any horses. The white men fed me, and they taught me their language. Now I can interpret for them and earn my living that way."

Sitting Bear was silent. "I have to eat." They all had to eat, and if the children were not fed at home, then they would find somebody else to feed them. What would happen to Singing Girl and Eagle Boy if he were not there? Would somebody find food for them? Would the white men take them in and turn them into imitation white men? He thought he knew the answers to these questions, and he shut them from his mind.

"Tell him his chief sent for me," Sitting Bear said at last. "He sent me a word himself. Now I am here to talk to the soldier chief."

Wood Smoke translated. All the others waited until the young man spoke. "He says it is late in the afternoon and that is not a good time to start talking. In the morning will be better. If you want to camp near Kicking Bird, they will send you two *wo-haws* to butcher."

"I will camp, but not near Kicking Bird. We'll camp down on the south creek, and he can send the *wo-haws* there."

Again Wood Smoke translated and turned back to Sitting Bear. "He says all right, as long as you make a peace camp."

"It will be a peace camp," Sitting Bear promised.

After dark, when the cattle had been driven in and slaughtered, when the women had butchered them and cooked the meat, and when people had eaten all they could of the food, Sitting Bear sent for Eagle Plume. They met outside Young Sitting Bear's tipi, and smoked there, by a little fire of twigs. The night wind was chilly, tugging at their blankets, and the warmth felt good.

"Something will happen," Sitting Bear told his son at last. "I don't think I will leave this place alive. If it does happen—if I do stay here—I want you to take care of your brother. Find a place like the one you found before, and lay him there, with his blanket and his gun and all his other things. Kill his horse; nobody else should ride in that saddle. His mother will understand."

"I will do that."

"Don't worry about me. Forget my name; forget both our names. Keep me in your heart if you can, but don't bind my memory to yours."

"I don't think I can ever forget you, Father."

Sitting Bear's face twisted. "Feed the children," he went on. "Do whatever you can for them, whatever seems the best thing to you, as long as they stay with their mother. Perhaps the white men will take them, who knows?"

"Nobody knows. Perhaps nothing will happen."

"Listen to the owl," said Sitting Bear. "He saw us off when we left Kicking Bird's camp, and he is here waiting for us. Something will happen, and it has always been my prayer that it happen to me, ever since the knife dropped in the fire."

Eagle Plume thought. "The whole world has changed. We can't help it. I don't know when the change began! It must have been a long time ago, but it seems to me as if I am just seeing it now. I will have to change in some ways, myself."

"You're young enough. You can change. I can only die."

Sitting Bear sat on by the fire after Eagle Plume left him. It was true, what he had heard his own voice say. He could not live as he had always lived and find food for his family. He could not farm like a Wichita, or raise cattle like a white man. He could only die. The words of the song he had given away came back into his mind, and he tapped it out softly with his pipestem, "All of us soldiers must die."

The next morning, White Bear, Big Tree, Lone Wolf, and Kicking Bird joined them. Sitting Bear tied his magic feather to his scalp lock before they left camp. When they were all painted and dressed in their best, they rode to the fort. The young officer was waiting for them and sent a word back into the building so the general would know they were there. After a few moments, the general came out and stood in the wooden arbor in front of the building. Wood Smoke trailed behind him.

"Sit down," he said, for the general.

They talked for a long time, uselessly. The general stated his thoughts first. Somebody had been raiding into Texas. A white man had been killed, and women and children captured. He must have the women and children back, and he must have the killers so they could be punished.

"How would he punish them?" Sitting Bear asked.

"White men punish by tying a man up, with his hands behind him, and then hanging him up by a rope around his neck until he dies," Wood Smoke said.

In spite of himself, Sitting Bear shivered. It was as bad as the Apaches' way of tying a man down on an anthill. Kiowas at least killed quickly, with one blow of a knife or one shaft of an arrow.

"I would never give my men up to be treated that way," he said. "Even if we had not ridden in peace."

"He wants to know where the women and children are."

"He can see for himself that there are no white people in my camp. I have heard that the Comanches have some."

"What's the use of all this talking?" White Bear demanded. "You went in peace and came back in peace, and I went in peace and came back in war. Tell him so! I'm no boy! I don't have to be protected."

"Be quiet," said Sitting Bear. "Do you want to be hung up by your neck until you are dead? I want to bargain with him if I can."

"You can't bargain with him!" White Bear shouted. He turned to Wood Smoke. "We've talked here all morning," he said. "We talked for four days at Medicine Lodge Creek before we saw it was no good and left. We can talk all the rest of our lives, and it won't do any good.

"My young men are excited and restless. Nobody ever tried to stop them from riding before. They have gone as far north as the Devil's Tower and as far south as the magic people with tails,* and everywhere everyone has respected them as Kiowas.

"Now here is a man who wants to tell us where to go and what to do and how to live! I won't take that from anyone! I led my young men out, and we rode and we fought and we took captives. That is our way; that is the Kiowa custom. We don't sit down and wait for someone to feed us. When somebody comes on our land and kills our game, we drive him off!"

* The "country of the magic people with tails" is Yucatan or British Honduras. In the early years of the nineteenth century, a party of young Kiowas traveled on foot the length of Mexico, and only turned north and home again when "magic people with tails," sitting in the trees, threw stones and branches down at them. The story is told in my *Black Stone Knife*.

Wood Smoke did not need to interpret. The general could understand the voice and the gestures, even if he didn't understand the words. Wood Smoke stepped back, as the white man rose and signaled to the mounted troopers in the green square behind the Kiowas. The soldiers began to close in.

Sitting Bear drove his spear into the hard ground and put his hand on it. "I stand here with my friend," he said. Big Tree did the same. Lone Wolf moved to join them, but the troopers cut him off, and shoved him back beside Kicking Bird. Lone Wolf tried to push past the horses, but before he could get there, it was all over. The troops had the three leaders captured and had tied their arms behind them, before anybody quite knew what had happened.

"Ride!" Sitting Bear shouted to Eagle Plume. "Get your brother's horse, and ride! Remember what I told you!"

Suddenly, Sitting Bear felt young again. His mind and his body were light to him. It was all over, all the years of making decisions, of planning and responsibility, even this last year of grief. He had been crazy; his sorrow had turned his head. But now he was himself and a man again. He could face anything at all. He was going to meet his son.

He threw back his head and began to sing the "Empty Saddle Song":

*I am going away from you.*
*I will be gone a long time.*
*Perhaps some morning you will see my horse,*
*Coming back with his saddle empty.*
*Lead him around the camp when all of my soldiers ride,*
*Look at that empty saddle,*
*And know I am riding too.*

He sang alone. White Bear and Big Tree did not utter a sound.

Then Sitting Bear turned to Wood Smoke. "Tell them that we are ready," he said. "They can hang us now."

There was a long talking again. Then Wood Smoke interpreted. "He says they do not hang men here. You will have to go to Texas for that. They will keep you here tonight, and in the morning they will send you in the wagon back to Texas, because that is where the men were killed and the women and children stolen."

"Where will they keep us tonight?"

Wood Smoke pointed to a building south and across the road from the one where they were talking. It was small, and its little windows were closed with iron rods. "Over there. That's where they put anybody who breaks the rules."

The soldiers shoved them off. They walked to the building and stumbled down the stone ladder to its bottom, underground. They tripped over stones put across the doorways and were shut into bare dark stone-walled holes with bare cots in them. White men felt the chiefs all over, to make sure they had no weapons.

There the three men stayed all night. A soldier brought them plates of food and cups of coffee and loosened their hands so they could eat. No one spoke to them, and the guard outside their doors would not let them talk to each other.

In the morning other soldiers came. They brought more food, and when Big Tree and White Bear had eaten what they could, the soldiers took away the food they left, with that which Sitting Bear had not touched.

The guards came back. They fastened the Kiowas' hands again, but this time with linked steel bracelets, and in front of them. Sitting Bear drew a deep breath. Now he could make a plan. The bracelets were very loose. They were made for a man with bigger hands than Sitting Bear's. He could almost—if he tried, and let the skin scrape off—pull his hands back through the bracelets and free himself.

Still, he left the bracelets on and raised his hands to straighten his hair. He pulled the magic feather from his scalp lock and held it, fanning himself with it, as they were pushed back up the stone ladder and out of the building. Two wagons with white canvas covers were waiting for them.

Big Tree and White Bear were loaded into one wagon, and Sitting Bear was put into the second. There were guards in both wagons, white soldiers with big and little guns. The three Kiowas were bound and as helpless as cattle.

Now they were jolting away down the road. They went past the square stone buildings and the square patch of grass. They came out into the sunlight of the plains on the curving crest of a little rise. Below them, they could see the stone corral and the trading post, and beyond them, the big lone pecan tree. Sitting Bear began to sing.

*Listen to me, both of you,*
*The time has come when I am going to say good-by.*
*I am going to meet my son today,*
*And I want him to get everything ready for me.*

*Fill the pipe, Son.*
*Tonight we will smoke together.*

*Hear me, my chiefs.*
*They cannot take me past that tree.*
*When we get there, get ready to run, my friends.*
*I am going to set myself free.*

The pecan tree was getting closer. He could almost make out the single leaves now.

*I live, but I will not live forever.*
*Mysterious moon, you only remain,*
*Powerful sun, you alone remain,*
*Wonderful earth, you remain forever.*
*All of us soldiers must die.*

He thrust the magic feather into his throat and coughed. The magic knife came out in his hand. He pulled his hand back through the bracelets, and swung the knife up. It drove between the shoulders of the guard in front of him, and even as it went home, the guards on either side fired their guns.

Sitting Bear was still alive when they dragged him across the guard's body and leaned him up against the pecan tree. He was singing his song and smiling, as he held out his arms to the spring wind, to welcome the son whom he loved.

# AFTERWORD

IN 1935 AND 1936, I spent the summers with the Kiowa Indians in southwestern Oklahoma. Those were the dust bowl years in that area, and what returns to me first, in retrospect, is the heat and the dust that rose from the plowed fields and choked us in revenge for white men's desecration of the land.

In those years, some of the old, old people were still alive. Eagle Plume was there to tell me, through his niece, Singing Girl's daughter, of his father's death. I listened to the story many times. Old Man Packing Rocks, named for the friend of his grandfather, White Bear, told me of the Gourd Dancers: their organization, duties, feasts, and dances. Spear Woman, George Hunt, Prickly Pear, Kiowa George, and many others who are gone now, helped to save the memories of the old way of life of their people.

Ten years later, some of the information they had contributed went to make *The Ten Grandmothers*. Inevitably, because the present book concentrates on one period of the time covered by the other, and because the material in both cases is drawn from the same source, the books will be compared.

Field notes are an anthropologist's investment in the future. Each time they are reviewed, different facts emerge, and differing relationships are established among them. If the same field notes could not supply information for more than one book, the anthropologist would have failed in his work or would not have matured as a person.

In this book I have tried to show two things: first, the man's side of life as a leading Kiowa chief lived it and ended it, and second, the forces that destroy one way of life and replace it with another, without awareness on the part of individuals.

Sitting Bear was, by all accounts, a remarkable man. He was atypical of his people, and yet he still personifies for them what they think of as Kiowa qualities: courage, determination, self-sacrifice, and generosity. He violated the taboo against going near the dead, or voicing the name of a dead person, by keeping his son's bones in his camp for a full year. The old people still spoke of this with horror—though they violated the taboo themselves, for they always called Sitting Bear by name when we spoke of him.

How long the Kiowas had been on the Plains when white infiltration began, where they came from, and to what group they are related linguistically, nobody yet knows. They are the Kiowas: Saynday brought them out of a hollow log in the days of the very beginning and brought the buffaloes to feed them. They worked with paint on buckskin and rawhide, never with quills. They have only the faintest remembrance of an agricultural tradition. They loved dogs and kept them as pets, looking with disgust on the Algonquian-speaking Cheyennes and Arapahos, who raised dogs to eat them.

So if in some ways Sitting Bear was atypical of his tribe, his tribe in some ways was atypical in the Plains area. The men's dancing societies, such as the recently revived Gourd Dancers and Blackfeet, were loosely organized in comparison with those of other Plains tribes.

On the other hand, the "sacred" societies—the Eagle Shields, the Taime or Sun Dance Shields, the Owl Shields and the Buffalo Shields, with the Bear Women—were tightly organized, and remind one of the close-knit organizations of some of the Rio Grande Pueblos. It is not impossible that the Kiowas had spent some time in the Southwest before they moved north, to the Yellowstone and Devil's Tower country, where the written records of them begin.

Probably these questions will go unanswered for all time. Speculation is self-indulgence. The best I can do is what I have done here: tell the stories of the Kiowas as they were told to me, as they are still being told and being acted before my eyes.

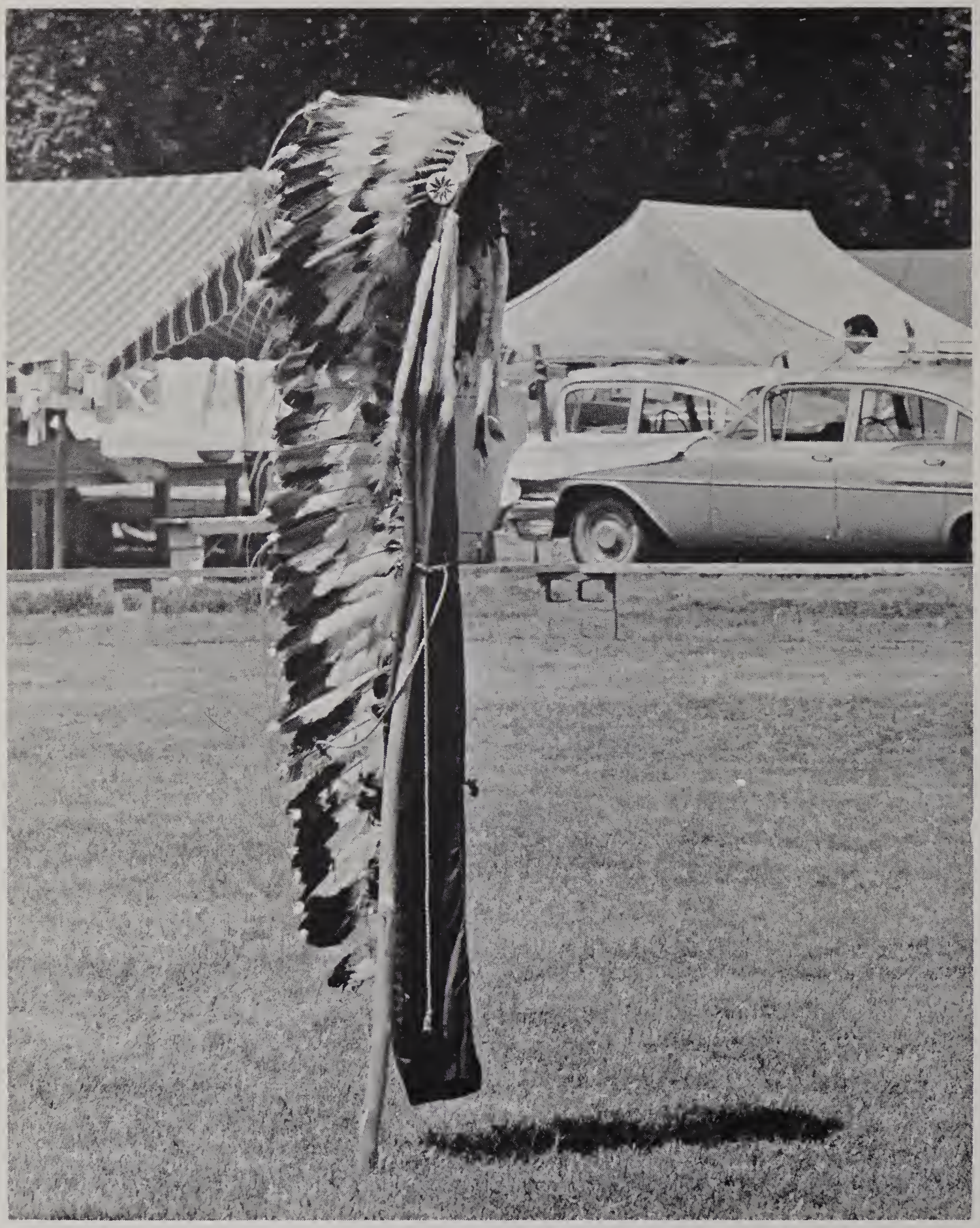
I have known five generations of Kiowas now. A representative of

the fifth, Miss Marguerite Tsoodle, is typing this manuscript for me. To her, to all her family, and to all my other Kiowa friends, I give my thanks.

In my own culture, I wish to thank the University of Oklahoma, which made my first research with the Kiowas possible; the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the United States Department of the Interior, which kept me in touch with the Kiowas through the late thirties and early forties; and the Anthropology Curriculum Study Project of the American Anthropological Association, which financed the present work. Thanks and acknowledgment should go to Miss Carol Rachlin and the personnel of the Oklahoma Indian Council, Inc., Oklahoma City, who brought Kiowa informants literally to my door at a time when I needed them most.

# FOURTH OF JULY

*The Gourd Dancers Today*



*White Bear's War Bonnet* stands as proudly in a modern camp (here at the Kiowa Gourd Dance, July 4, 1963) as it once did in a tipi circle. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)

# IT STILL GOES ON

Most of the pictures in the section that follows were taken at the Kiowa Gourd Dance on the Fourth of July, 1962, by Miss Carol K. Rachlin, an anthropologist. Although that was a few years ago, these scenes are characteristic of those you would see if you visited Carnegie, Oklahoma, next summer.

Young men still make vows to give "a beef"—that is, a steer—to the Gourd Dancers to make a feast for all the people. To prove that they mean what they say, the men dance holding the ceremonial spear that White Bear had staked through the trailer of his war bonnet to the ground when he faced the enemy. White Bear was ready to fight until he was killed, although one of the Gourd Dancers pulled up the stake crying, "Go forward! Go forward!" this meant, "Retreat!" for in those times the Gourd Dancers "talked in contraries."

The modern Gourd Dance society was formed in 1958 by men who were directly descended from White Bear. Since then, the Gourd Dancers have taken White Bear's pipe to men of other tribes, or to other Kiowas, whom they respect and wish to honor by letting them join the society. At first the society could call itself a "clan" in the strict sense of the word —all the members of the modern Gourd Dancers were descendants of a common male ancestor. Nowadays, though no longer a clan, they form a society like that of the original Gourd Dancers.

The Gourd Dance celebration comes at the time of the Sun Dance, and has replaced the Sun Dance. People gather to visit, to feast, and to talk over the events of the past year, just as they used to. The Kiowa camps are open to all comers; everyone is welcome and everyone is fed. In the Carnegie City Park, with a swimming pool and a miniature railroad in the background; with the city fathers setting off fireworks in the field across the highway for *their* city's celebration, the Kiowas come together again—just as they always did. *Aho*, Gourd Dancers! For all of us, *Aho!*



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*Portraits of Henry and Fred Tsoodle:* Henry Tsoodle has handed down to his son, Fred, the traditions of the Kiowas. When Fred, a World War II veteran now in the Transportation Division, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma City, enlisted





in the armed forces, he followed the Kiowa tradition of "setting his spear," signifying that he would die before surrendering. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*The Gourd Dancers Face the War Bonnet* on the post, right; the sacred feathered "stalking" lance, left of center; with captured cavalry sabres and bugle ("The Winter the Bugle Was Blown" bugle) that belonged to their common ancestor, White Bear. His descendants organized the Kiowa Gourd Dancers in 1958. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*Under the Trees by the Dance Ground (left):* Gourd Dance members still give painted horses to visitors from other tribes. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*Portrait of a Boy (above):* dressed as his great, great grandfather did, with fur-wrapped braids and otterskin hat. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*Group of Women:* Even under the trees, the Oklahoma summer sun is hot. Members of the Tsoodle family and their friends, in modern and traditional dress, take shelter under parasols as they watch the Gourd Dance. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*Fred Tsoodle (left)* observes the Kiowa tradition of thrusting the sacred spear into the ground as pledge to give a beef to feed the camps at the next Gourd Dance. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)

*Group of Round Dancers from Rear (below):* At night, when a cool breeze blows, the young people put on their finest buckskin and feathers for the exhibition and social dancing. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)





*Oscar Tsoodle and Alice Marriott (left):* Oscar Tsoodle talked about the buffalo hunting days to anthropologists (including the author) inside the Ten Grandmothers tipi. (Photo credit: Collection Alice Marriott, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)



*Portrait of Margaret (Hunt) Tsoodle (above):* Interpreters, like Margaret Tsoodle and her sister, Ioleta (Hunt) MacElhaney, the daughters of Singing Girl, who speak both Kiowa and English, helped to make the record clear and complete. (Photo credit: Carol K. Rachlin, Southwest Research Associates, Oklahoma City)

# THE KIOWAS

*Profile of a People*



*Herd of Buffalo:* Once buffalo covered the plains of western Oklahoma in herds that stretched as far as the eye could see. Today, the town of Carnegie stands where buffalo once grazed, and here the Gourd Dancers meet every summer on the Fourth of July. (Photo credit: Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma)

# INTRODUCTION

No culture in the world has so captured men's imaginations as that of the Plains Indians. Say "Indian" to the average European or eastern American, and his response is, "Horses," or "War bonnets."

There is good reason for these replies. Plains Indian culture arose, flourished, and declined during the time when the world of the western European and the citizen of the new United States was closing in on it. As white men's communications and transportation improved, their horizons shrank. The Plains Indian, in popular conception, was a man whose horizon was limitless —a man who sought his Holy Grail on hillsides and mesatops; who lived in camps, not towns; who could move across the face of the earth when and where and as he wanted to. The Plains Indian, to white men's eyes, was a man without landlord or tenant or conception of landownership. At a time when property bound most men down to so many feet of possessive earth, the Plains Indian was free. No wonder that other men envied and idealized him.

But, of course, the Plains Indians were no more free of duties and responsibilities than any other men. They had tribal hunting territories to defend. They had families. They had property in the form of horses, weapons, household goods, and the tipis which sheltered them and their belongings.

The Great Plains had been occupied before the white men came. Villages were located along the rivers, set above flood level on the second terraces. Around the villages were the women's fields and gardens, planted mainly with maize, beans, squashes, and tobacco. As many as a thousand people at a time

could live in one of these villages. The ruins of a Pawnee village in northern Nebraska show the skeletons of hundreds of great earth lodges, each of which would have held a large family.

The rivers were the highways of these early peoples. The footpaths ran beside the streams, crossing and recrossing where the banks turned sheer or the waters ran shallow. Some of the northern tribes who later moved into the heart of the Plains, like the Santee Sioux, traveled the rivers with canoes; some of the tribes in the southern part of the area, like the Osages and Quapaws, used rafts or rawhide "bull-boats" —round, bowl-like waterproof containers in which persons and their possessions could ferry over the streams.

All the tribes living on or near the Plains became hunters. They depended mainly on the buffalo for food, though deer and antelope were also part of their diet. Small game, such as rabbits, ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and wild fowl, the bones of which have been found in village sites, were probably hunted by the young boys, or by men in times of famine and emergency.

When a great buffalo hunt was planned, everybody in a village stored his possessions in his house, and packed up and moved out. Drags (or travois) were harnessed to the dogs for the loads of meat and skins the hunters would bring in.

There was mobility around and about the Plains before horses were introduced. The coming of horses changed Plains Indian life in many ways, but there was always a basis of previous ways of life on which the new customs could stand firm.

In the case of many Plains Indian tribes, the coming of horses can be dated. We know approximately when the first man captured a horse strayed from the Spanish or English herds, and rode out of the brush along the creek bank into a new life. In the case of the Kiowas of the Southern Plains, however, the date is uncertain.

The first recorded European meeting with the Kiowas was by the Spaniards on the Yellowstone, in 1706. At that time the Kiowas were already wanderers, although they did not have horses. Large dogs served them as pack animals. Well into the nineteenth century, many men and some women seem to have specialized in breeding pack dogs.

By 1732, the Spanish records state that the Kiowas had "plenty of horses, probably stolen from Mexico." By then, these Indians were located far south of the Yellowstone and east of the Devil's Tower of the Black Hills in North Dakota, which they still regard as a national shrine. Devil's Tower is the scene of the Kiowa legends about the Twin War Gods, or Half Boys, who

brought the people through many dangers and gave them their medicine, or power, bundles, which are known as "The Ten Grandmothers."

In the period we are dealing with, the 1870's, the Comanches lived south of the Kiowas. About 1800 the two tribes had agreed upon a treaty and were on good terms. The grass-hut villages of the Wichitas were also south of the Kiowa range in historic times, although some of the Wichitas originally lived in Kansas.

North of the Kiowa country were the Cheyennes and the Arapahos. With them the Kiowas had been at peace since 1841, a peace confirmed in the Medicine Lodge Treaty that the Plains tribes signed with the whites in 1866.

To the east lay the barrier of the Cross Timbers, and beyond it the Five Civilized Tribes: the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles. The Cross Timbers were an almost impenetrable thicket of trees lashed together by vines and brambles, twenty to fifty miles wide, which separated eastern and western Oklahoma until after 1850, when railroad companies began clearing the land to lay tracks. These Five Civilized Tribes were nations that in the 1830's had been uprooted from their homes in Tennessee, the Carolinas, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, and backed up against the Cross Timbers in the "Indian Territory" that has since become the eastern half of Oklahoma State.

To the west of the Kiowas were the Navahos and the Plains Apaches, the Utes, and various groups that the Kiowas vaguely lumped together as "Pueblos." With the people of the Tewa villages (or pueblos) along the Rio Grande, especially with Taos, Picuris, Nambe, and San Ildefonso, the Kiowas met once a year or so at the site of the present Tucumcari, New Mexico. Here a great artesian spring, widely known as the "Peace Spring," furnished a supply of water and grass sufficient for large intertribal gatherings. At the Peace Spring the Plains peoples offered dried meat, dressed hides, and salt in trade for the Pueblo corn and corn meal, rolled paper-thin corn bread, honey, dried plums, peaches, apples, and apricots. These last three European fruits had been introduced to New Mexico by Spanish colonists in the seventeenth century.

The Kiowas and their neighbors had occupied these same relative positions from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries.

This pattern of Plains occupancy was altered by outside forces. From the French and Indian War in 1763, white men along the Atlantic seaboard and up the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes had been dispossessing the Indian tribes of the northeast. The Sauk and

Fox, Pottawatomies, Delawares, Kickapoos, and Miamis had been pushed westward against the Osages, Poncas, Otos, Omahas, and Quapaws. These tribes, in turn, exerted pressure on the Pawnees and on the Siouan groups resident in Nebraska and the Dakotas. Pawnees and Sioux began inching southward onto the headwaters of the Arkansas and Canadian rivers.

To the south, the French colonists in greater Louisiana had displaced the small and peaceful Caddoan groups—Nadakao, Hasinai, and Caddo proper among others—driving them northward to their linguistic brothers, the Wichitas.

By the 1850's, after the discovery of gold in California and the resultant demand for agricultural, fishing, lumbering, and ranching development along the west coast, railway surveys of the Cross Timbers and the Great Plains were begun. It was soon apparent that two things stood in the way of the westward course of Empire: the great northern and southern buffalo herds, and the Indians who lived on them.

The outbreak of the Civil War made necessary the withdrawal of government forces from the Great Plains and the abandonment of a line of partially constructed forts along the eastern margin of the Plains. White buffalo hunters, who were doing a flourishing business on the Northern Plains, interrupted their activities and went east to join the troops.

Texas was violently pro-Confederate. The territories of New Mexico and Arizona, afraid of the Texans and also of invasion from Mexico, hung off and on in their allegiance to the United States government. Battles between Union and Confederate forces were fought in both territories. The westward spread of the Civil War continued to southern California, where it was stopped by the Pacific Ocean.

It was a time of respite and a heyday for the Plains Indians. White men were all regarded as their enemies. Loyalist troops from among the Five Civilized Tribes, on whom the United States had counted as a buffer at the eastern margin of the Plains, could no longer hold the frontier. Their own nations were divided, slave against free.

During the Civil War years, from 1860 to 1865, the Kiowas and their allies raided, burned, and looted, especially toward the south. Texan captives were carried off with their horses and other livestock. The Indians had resumed control of the heartland of America, and they took full advantage of their opportunity and new, improved weapons to plunder the invaders. At no other time in their history were the Kiowas as militarily strong or as economically independent as during the early 1860's.

At the close of the Civil War, public attention in the eastern states again turned westward. There was an abundance of land in the Great Plains—certainly more than the Indians needed, in the white men's estimation. The invention of steam plows and other heavy agricultural machinery now made it possible to break open the prairie soil and to cultivate grain crops upon it. Railroads had to be built to accommodate westward-moving settlers and the eastward-moving crops the settlers would raise on their new lands. The two obstacles to white occupation had to be removed. The buffalo and the Indian had to go.

By 1875, the buffaloes were gone. The white hunters had wiped them out so quickly and thoroughly that the Indians could not believe the herds had been killed. The buffaloes must have escaped from the white men into the folds of the earth. A woman said she had seen the last of the buffaloes vanish into a cave in the side of the Wichita Mountains, and the opening of the cave close behind them. This made perfectly good sense to the Kiowas. Their trickster-hero, Saynday, had long ago brought the buffaloes to them out of a hole in the earth.

So the Kiowas of the years covered in this book were by no means untouched by other cultures. They were experiencing an extremely hard impact from the cultures of the other Indians and from that of the invading whites. It must be understood that this book tells of people under stress, not of men and women leading their lives in their ordinary way. The introduction of the Springfield Seventy carbine rifle—the gun that won the Plains—brought the same type of cultural shock to the Kiowas in 1870 that the first atomic bomb did to the whole world in 1945.

As a result of outside pressure, the Kiowas drew closer together. Their range contracted, and the bands rubbed up against each other. The Kiowa Apaches, who had been affiliated with the Kiowa proper at least since written history began in western North America, moved in toward the main group. Kiowa horizons began to shrink as European horizons had begun shrinking in the earlier years of the century, when the Industrial Revolution began.

It was no longer easy for the older women of each band to decide on camping sites, and to tell the men where to go. After a day's hard travel, a band might find the chosen location, traditionally its own, already occupied by another band or even another tribe. Sharp quarrels broke out. There were fights over grass and water and over hunting rights. A rich people was becoming poor, and everyone felt the strain.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BUFFALO

We can never exaggerate the importance and economic worth of the buffalo in Plains Indian life. The buffalo gave the Indians so many things that a list of its gifts is truly staggering.

## Shelter

The great conical tipis of the Indians were made of buffalo hides. Each family saved its largest and heaviest skins to be tanned and cut into tipi covers. When a woman needed a new dwelling, she took gifts (usually food, cooking utensils, and tobacco) to another woman who was famed for her skill in cutting and making tipis. All the women in camp gathered for the sewing bee. They laughed and chatted, but also they worked hard, for a tipi begun at sunrise must be finished before darkness. At the end of the day, when the white cone shone proudly against the sunset, the maker and the owner of the tipi built the first fire in the center of the floor, sprinkled it with cedar dust and tobacco, and prayed for the health and happiness of all it would shelter. "A fine tipi is like a beautiful woman," the Indians said. "She holds her family in the curve of her arms, and protects and cares for it."

Inside the tipi, the willow-rod beds had mattresses of buffalo hide tanned with the hair on and blankets of soft-tanned buffalo-calf skins. Tanning was at once a woman's greatest skill and pride and her weariest drudgery. Once she had begun to stretch and pull a hide, working into it the mashed liver and brains that brought about the chemical change of softening the skin, she could not stop until she had finished. Otherwise the hide would stiffen and harden, and the whole job would have to be done over again.

Everything in the tipi had its place. The door faced east except during Sun Dance times in midsummer. In a straight line with the door, under the smoke flaps, or ears, of the tipi, and west of center, was the fire. Beyond it, still in line with the doorway, was the honored place, the place of the man of the house. His weapons lay to his right, his pipe to his left, ready for use should enemy or friend enter the tipi. Sitting on his bed, the man would be the first to see anyone who came in.

## Utensils

On the south side of the door was the housewife's place. Here she kept her buffalo-paunch water bags and, on willow racks, the long forked sticks for turning roasting meat, her spare knives, and the wooden vessels and the buffalo-horn spoons with which the members of her family ate. Under her bed were stored the parfleches (rawhide envelopes) that held the family's supply of dried food.

Between mother and father the girls and little boys had places along the south side of the tipi curve. Their beds, too, were made of strung willow rods, supported by bois d'arc tripods at head and foot, and were covered with buffalo-hide mattresses and robes. The parfleches that held the family clothes were used also as cushions on the beds.

The young men and older boys occupied the north side of the tipi. From here they could slip out, without waking other members of the family, to herd horses or do other early morning chores.

Between each pair of the four supporting tipi poles were set five secondaries. Sometimes there hung from the upper curve of the poles a tipi lining, or dew cloth, of painted buffalo hide. It was tucked behind and under the beds to keep out drafts and dampness in winter. In summer the dew cloth was packed in a parfleche. The tipi cover could then be rolled up for a few feet from the ground so the interior would be cooler.

Sacred objects hung above the man's place in the tipi or were placed on tripods behind and outside it. The sacred objects included the man's shield, if he had one, medicine bundles, and any personal magic guarded by members of the family.

## Food

There were almost as many ways of preparing buffalo meat as there were cooks. A woman could dig a hole in the ground, line it with skin, add water and meat, and drop in hot stones, a few at a time, until the stew was cooked. At the time we are talking about, stew was usually cooked in a metal bucket hung above the fire, inside the tipi in winter, outside in summer. Long strips of meat could be folded back and forth, accordion-fashion, on sharpened sticks, and roasted over the flames. Tongues and ribs, which were considered the choice parts of the buffalo, were simply banked with coals and roasted. Liver, kidneys, and other internal organs were often eaten raw during butchering.

Buffalo meat could also be dried. For this, the meat was usually taken from the shoulders and hams, where the flesh was dense and boneless. Meat to be dried was peeled away from the solid cut in a long, thin, continuous strip, which was hung on drying racks in the

full sun. Yes, there were flies which carried diseases.

The dried meat was kept in strips or pounded in a rawhide mortar with a stone hammer until the meat was reduced to powder. The meat meal was sometimes stored by itself, but sometimes pounded chokecherries or squawberries and melted fat were mixed into it, and the result was pressed into cakes. Whichever method was used, a good housewife kept her tipi well supplied from hunting season to hunting season.

Although deer and antelope meat was eaten fresh or dried, it was thought of only as a supplement to the staff of life, buffalo meat. Rabbits, prairie dogs, terrapins, wild turkeys, wild doves, sage hens, and the eggs of wild birds, when any could be found, also varied the Kiowa diet. Fish could have been caught in the shallow western rivers, but the Kiowas did not eat them.

Kiowa food of the hunting days would have seemed extremely tasteless to twentieth century palates. Kiowas who have served in foreign theaters of war have brought back a taste for spaghetti with Parmesan cheese, for duck roasted with water chestnuts and served with fried rice, and for the classic items of French cooking.

In the 1870's, almost the only seasonings the Kiowas used were salt, which they gathered from the Great Salt Plain in northwestern Oklahoma, and sage. Wild potatoes (eaten with a white clay), wild turnips, Jerusalem artichokes, chokecherries, several varieties of wild plums, squawberries, edible sumac berries, wild honey, and pecans and hickory nuts were gathered by women and children and added to soups or eaten plain. In the main, however, the Kiowas ate meat, meat, and more meat. Until they began to trade with the Pueblos and Mexicans, the Kiowas had no starchy foods "except that little bit of corn they could steal from the Wichitas."*

After they began to deal with the traders, the Kiowas had coffee, sugar (raw brown lumps at first, refined white sugar later), bacon, and beef. They learned to make campfire bread from wheat flour, winding the flour-and-water dough around sticks to roast over the fire, or patting out flat dough cakes to bake in ember-covered Dutch ovens.

The effects of the addition of starch and sugar to the Kiowa diet can be seen in the health of modern Kiowas, four generations later. Bad teeth, overweight, and heart trouble and diabetes are the greatest health problems facing the Kiowas of 1967.

*Passage in quotation marks is taken from Thomas Battey's *The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

## Clothing

Clothing, too, came from the buffalo. In the old days, men dressed literally from head to foot in buffalo skins. Their moccasin soles were cut out of rawhide; the uppers were made from soft-tanned buffalo-calf skin, which wore better than buckskin. Leggings, to protect the legs from mesquite thorns and low-growing brush, were also made from buffalo calf skins, as were the breechcloths and the belts tied around the men's waists to secure leggings and breechcloth.

The most distinctive part of the Kiowa woman's costume was her boot-leggings. The uppers of her hard-soled moccasins were cut in one piece with, or attached to, stocking-tight leggings that came up to the knee. The tops were tied there with strips of soft hide, and the long fringes on the legging tops were turned over and allowed to swing about the woman's ankles when she walked.

The well-dressed Kiowa man in the 1870's wore a buffalo-calf skin shirt for formal occasions, but dispensed with it at home or when he was fighting or hunting. Usually he wrapped the upper part of his body in a buffalo skin robe, wearing this with the fur turned inside in the winter, for additional warmth.

Kiowa women wore two-piece dresses of blouse and skirt. The skirt was tied around the wearer's waist, and the blouse hung over it. Around her waist a woman wore a wide, stiff belt of buffalo rawhide. This took the place of a corset and supported her back. From the belt she hung her knife in its scabbard and her awl in its case. An assortment of small bags, containing face paint, sinew for sewing, and other small necessities, also hung from the right side of the belt, within easy reach. Like the men, the women wore robes for extra warmth, or sometimes replaced their blouses with the wraps. When a woman was busy with heavy work, like tanning, she might slip off her blouse or robe to leave her arms and shoulders bare and free.

# KIOWA WAYS

Unlike other Plains Indians, at no time in their history, as far as we know, did the Kiowas use porcupine quills for decoration. Instead, they relied on earth paints or trade beads. Partly this was because, in the historic period, they were living in Oklahoma, where there are no porcupines. Partly it was because of religious taboo, for like the bear, the porcupine was a prominent character in the myth of the Half Boys, their Spider Grandmother, and the bringing of the Ten Grandmothers.

## Bands

In the strictly dictionary sense of the word, the Kiowas in 1870 were not and never had been a "tribe." They were a group of confederated bands, each with its own territory and its own dialect. The bands were autonomous and seldom met except at Sun Dance times. The great Dohasan ("Little Bluff"), who died in 1866, is said to have been the last of a series of chiefs who drew the bands together into a fighting force. The record shows that Dohasan had great personal influence, but not that he was a lone heroic chief of the Kiowas. Since him, no single man has been even as much a unifying force as he was.

Each band had its own acknowledged war and peace leaders. A few men of outstanding ability, like Sitting Bear, acted in both capacities. Others, like Lone Wolf, distinguished themselves as tacticians and generals, but made no attempt to direct band activities in time of peace. Still others, like Anko, were wise councillors, whose gifts were needed when the fighting died away.

The number of Kiowa bands varied from time to time. As many as thirteen and as few as seven coexistent bands have been listed. Probably war tended to consolidate smaller bands and resulted in fewer band camps with larger membership in each. The size of a given band at a given time also depended on the amount of game and grass available, the number of men out on hunting and war parties, and perhaps other limiting and variable factors.

In fact, the structure of Kiowa bands was so flexible that it accommodated what were known as "Lonely Band Families." A family in mourning, or one that had simply got on the outs with its neighbors, could leave the main camp and live apart from the band. If a Lonely Band leader were strong enough,

he would attract followers. Eventually the cluster of people might become a new band.

On the other hand, an unpopular man or family might be left to camp alone, and to depend on his or their own skills for food and protection. This was neglect on the part of other people, but it could be extended as punishment for asocial behavior. Deliberate exile from a band camp was the most severe punishment of all, and was equal to life imprisonment in Kiowa eyes.

In 1967 the feud between the descendants of Kicking Bird and those of Sitting Bear still continues. Tribal politics reflect a power struggle almost a century old. The division of the tribe into "fractions," as one Kiowa terms the existing situation, not only reflects an historical pattern but also is a sociological fact that has often been overlooked by students of Plains Indian life.

## Language

For a long time the Kiowa language was thought to stand alone, without linguistic affiliations, in the same way as the language of Zuni, one of the largest of the Pueblos. Later, Kiowan was tentatively linked to Tanoan, the northernmost form of Tewa, and so to the great Uto-Aztecan stock. Some linguists accept the identification, while others do not. The old ceremonial Kiowa language, in its purest form, has been almost completely lost. Few living Kiowas even recognize this form of speech as allied to their own language when they hear it. Modern Kiowa, strongly flavored with Spanish and English words, is a contracted, slang form of "good Kiowa." Perhaps if more of the old language had been preserved, we should have a clearer picture of Kiowa linguistic affiliations.

## Physical Appearance

At the time we are talking about, the 1870's, the Kiowas were at their best. Epidemic diseases touched them very lightly in comparison with the decimation of other tribes by diseases brought by the white men.

The Kiowas varied considerably in physical type. Intermarriage with Indians of other tribes and with Mexican captives undoubtedly contributed to the variation. Men ranged in height from the six-feet-and-upwards of the Northern Plains to the shortness of the mountain Yaquis and Tarahumaras of northern Mexico. Sitting Bear, for instance, was a small man, barely five feet six inches tall. On the other hand, everyone who has left us a description of White Bear was impressed by his height and massive build. Between the two extremes were men of moderate height, who were heavy-set rather than lightly built, with conspicuously broad shoulders, deep chests, and short and often bowed legs. Their heads were massive and broad, and set solidly on short, heavy necks,

and their features were often Mongoloid. Their descendants show similar physical characteristics today.

Kiowa women were not as tall as the men. Their average height was about five feet three inches. Most Kiowa women put on weight in middle age, and other tribes took note of the fact. The Cheyennes used the expression "as fat as a Kiowa" for any woman they considered overweight.

## Life

In the 1870's the Kiowas had large herds of horses, and still had control of enough grazing land to support them. Many men had acquired horse-breeding and veterinary skills, so the herds flourished and the horses were well cared for. Everybody rode. In the Kiowa years as well as in the cattle-raising period which followed the fall of the Southern Plains tribes, "A man afoot was no man at all."

The Kiowas traded horses north to the Cheyennes, the Arapahos, and the Crows. Their westward trading area extended to the Plains Apaches, the Utes, and the eastern Pueblos when the Kiowas were on trading terms with the first two groups, who could block the trails to the Rio Grande, if they wished. They even traded horses with the northern Mexicans. Their resultant wealth in fabrics, metal utensils and tools, corn and corn meal, sugar, flour, and coffee gave them a surplus of worldly goods. They had time to perfect skills: singing, storytelling, prayer, and warfare. Kiowa drawing and painting did not develop as richly as the other arts and was never comparable to the graphic arts of such Plains tribes as the Cheyenne and the Sioux. Kiowa creativity took an oral, rather than a visual, direction.

## Creativity

In fact, when we think of the "style" of the Kiowa way of life, it is in linked terms of mobility—which we have already talked about—and sound. Oratory was highly respected. Musicians ranked in importance with priests; in fact, to be a priest a man had to be a musician. "To make songs" was as worthy an achievement as "to make prayers."

There were Kiowa songs for all occasions: love songs to be sung or played on the five-toned flute, lullabies, hide-tanning and brush-gathering songs, songs for riding out of camp to war and for riding into camp victorious or defeated, and songs for joy and songs for sorrow. Deepest grief was expressed in a wailing, shrilling cry, which often resolved itself into a wordless song of mourning. And today there are more singers and song-makers among the Kiowas than in most other Oklahoma Indian tribes.

## Societies

Kiowa men's societies were not rigidly age-graded. All little boys belonged to the Rabbits until they were about twelve years old. They passed into the Herders' society, where they received their first formal instruction in horse care, hunting, and warfare. From the age of about eighteen, a young man could join one or another of the men's societies, whichever invited him. He could, if he had friends in a particular society, let them know that it would be his choice. However, when the members of the society brought him their ceremonial pipe and invited him to smoke and to become one of them, it was etiquette for the new member to express himself as greatly surprised and deeply unworthy of the honor that was being offered him.

Another constellation of men's societies, known as the Shield Societies, was more ceremonial than social in character. In this constellation were the Crazy Dogs or Crazy Horses, who restricted membership to the ten men acknowledged by all Kiowas as the bravest of the brave; the Taime (timy) Shields, whose duty it was to guard the Sun Dance priest and the stone image (called the Taime) which was the Sun Dance fetish; the Eagle Shields, who dealt in magic; the Buffalo Shields, who cured wounds and broken bones, and who always accompanied war parties as doctors; and the Owl Shields, who prophesied and who, with the help of the spirits of the dead, could help people find lost articles.

There were also two societies for women, the functions of which have been obscured by time. The Calf Old Women apparently paralleled the organization of the men's dancing societies. They met to feast and dance, they instructed younger women in household skills, and they inspired respect, not fear.

The Bear Old Women, on the other hand, were a deeply feared secret society. To maintain secrecy, they covered their faces. On their meeting days, children and young people were sent out of camp. It is said that when the Bear Old Women came to the tipi in which a donor spread a feast for them, their leader squatted on her haunches before the door and pawed at the entrance, growling deep in her throat like a bear.

Each of the men's dancing societies had its "sisters," and the Calf Old Women had a "younger brother." "Sisters" and "brothers" were treated like real brothers and sisters. If one of them married, it must be with the society's approval, and the members of the society contributed generously to the wedding gifts. The mate had to be from outside the society, not only from outside the family. Only a young man

or woman of fine character and deportment would be chosen for one of these honorable positions. The distinction was held for life, although most sisters dropped out of their societies after marriage, and certainly after bearing children.

## Family Customs

The Kiowa family unit was the biological family: a man, his wife or wives, and his children and grandchildren. Old people were honored, and elderly parents usually occupied their own tipi near that of a daughter. The levirate, a widow marrying her husband's brother, and the sororate, a man marrying his wife's sister, were practiced. This assured women of protection should a first husband die and promised a husband a happy and contented home if he lost or added a wife.

Family etiquette was usually strict. Brothers and sisters were regarded as "closest kin," and were not permitted to joke with one another, or to use obscene language in one another's presence. The same taboos applied to parent-child behavior. Children were on terms of joking familiarity with their grandparents, their mother's brothers, and their father's sisters. Special reciprocal kinship terms were used in these relationships. There was an absolute taboo on communication between father-in-law and daughter-in-law and between mother-in-law and son-in-law. As marks of deep respect, these persons could not speak to one another, utter one another's names, sit in the same tipi, exchange glances, or eat together.

In some wealthy and distinguished families, the institution of the favored child was established. The child could be a boy or a girl, and might be the oldest or youngest, or an in-between member of a sibling group. Simply, the parents and grandparents decided that this child should receive the best of everything and be honored and respected above all other members of the family. In return, the favored child was required to be on his best behavior at all times, to be kind, gracious, and courteous under all circumstances, and to set an example of generosity for everyone.

Some reference should be made to that Great Plains institution, the giveaway. Among the Kiowas, it was at once a display of wealth and a social security. At the Sun Dance, and often at other large gatherings, families gave away their goods in honor of favored children, young men returned from war or young women of good character, or in fulfillment of a vow.

The gifts were bestowed on visitors from other tribes or on the old and poor. It was considered bad form to give to persons of one's own age-group if they were Kiowas, or to members of one's own family of any age. Giving

in honor of a young person implied that he himself was the donor. In this way all young people learned hospitality and generosity. In their turn, when they were old, ill, or in need, or when they visited another tribe, they would receive gifts.

Too often families stripped themselves of all their worldly goods, and stories are told of giveaway competitions between leading families. It was obligatory on a chief to give; he had to be distinguished by apparent poverty combined with skill to obtain further wealth in the form of horses, captured guns and ammunition, and perhaps money plundered from a wagon train. Money was at first used to make silver ornaments and later as currency in the trading post.

The story is told of an old couple, too poor to give away and too physically weak to hunt or fight, who still were able to keep their dignity in the endless back-and-forth exchange of the giveaways. At the time of the great summer buffalo hunts, these two led their only horse, old and poor as it was, among the slaughtered buffalo. The killers had taken the choice parts of the meat. The old people took what was left. Back in camp, they carefully dried and prepared it for the winter. And when the blue northers swept over the prairies, when the hunters could not go out and supplies in other tipis were running low, the old man went from tipi to tipi, calling to the mothers, "Send your children to our camp, and we will feed them. Let all the little ones come to visit us. Don't let your children go hungry!" Many adults, too, were fed through the kindness and thoughtfulness of this old couple.

A giveaway followed a death and was part of the mourning customs. Everything the deceased member of the family had owned or used had to be disposed of. Horses were sometimes killed in sacrifice, but more often they were given to friends of the family. All clothing, all bedding, a woman's cooking utensils and a man's weapons and little fripperies like hair-parting sticks and hand mirrors and face paint—all had to be cleared away, so nothing remained to remind the grieving relatives of the person who was gone. His name was to be forgotten and never spoken again. Words that resembled it in sound or meaning were often changed. The pet name an adult had used in speaking to a child might be dropped and the child renamed.

The body was washed and painted, then laid on a bed inside a newly erected tipi. If horses were sacrificed, their throats were slit before the tipi door. There was no interment and no exposure on a scaffold. The tipi and its contents remained, usually on an isolated hilltop, away from camping areas, until all rotted away.

For a year following a death, the

family camped alone, or on the fringe of the band camp. The members wore old clothes and no paint, women cut their hair short, and men let theirs hang disheveled. Often, mourners gashed their arms and legs or the skin over their ribs. Women cut off finger joints as sacrifices of mourning, but men did not mutilate their hands.

In the old days, a Kiowa child was called "Baby," or by a kinship or age term, until he or she was about two years old. When a "running around baby" reached the point of acting as an individual, he received his first name. This was usually a descriptive term or phrase: the child noticed a bright flower and pointed to it, he ate a great deal of some particular food, or his movements resembled those of some animal.

Later in life, the individual's name was changed. A new name might be announced as the result of a dream or power vision. An honored name might be bestowed by a man who had many war deeds to recount, and who, in return for naming the child for one of them, was given horses and other goods. Or perhaps a particular skill, like story-telling, tipi-making, or beadworking suggested a name for a young woman, which was given to her by an older one who already displayed the same skill. "Story-Writes Woman," the name of an ethnographer, was given by ninety-year-old "Story-Tells Woman," who received, in her turn, a shawl, blankets, towels, and a make-up kit. Names were not handed down in families, but were "thrown away" after a death.

## KIOWA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Another characteristic of the Kiowa style was a spongelike ability to absorb traits from other peoples. The entire complex of horse-culture and the use of guns and ammunition are, of course, classic examples of Indian acculturation to the ways of white men. But the process of adapting culture traits permeated every phase of Kiowa life, including religion.

### Guardian Spirits

The oldest religious complex still practiced by the Kiowas of the 1870's was

based on beliefs that were probably shared to a greater or lesser degree by all American Indians. These beliefs were a sort of pantheism, according to which animals, birds, trees, plants, stones, rivers, and all the forces of nature—storm and sunshine, snow and rain, and summer's heat—were man's brothers and equals. He could call on their spirits to assist him in whatever he did.

A boy went out to seek a spirit guardian either just before or just after he reached puberty, and he could repeat the quest, if he liked, at different times throughout his adult life. Certain sites were known as "power places," and whoever could get there went to one of them. The north slope of Mt. Scott, north of Lawton, Oklahoma, was one of these power places. Another was the dip between the twin peaks of Saddle Mountain, to the northwest of Mt. Scott. Still a third was a cluster of mineral hot springs south of Carnegie, Oklahoma, which dried up during the dust bowl years of the 1930's. A fourth was the big artesian spring that now supplies water for the municipal swimming pool at Hobart, Oklahoma. Very good spirits lived in all these locations.

Kiowa spirit guardians took many forms. A guardian could be a bird, a lizard, or an animal. It could be the rain pillars marching across the Plains in midsummer, or a strong wind blowing from a certain direction. It was whatever natural phenomenon came to comfort and sustain the vision-seeker during or just after his four days of total fasting. During the time of his quest a boy could neither eat nor drink, but he had to smoke, for tobacco helped bring the spirits. The smoke from his pipe represented the prayers of all men, rising to spirits above and spreading to all peoples.

A man's spirit guardian instructed him in many things. The spirit taught him the songs and prayers he should use. Some spirits imposed rigid taboos on their wards. Perhaps the seeker should not eat the meat of a guardian animal or bird. Perhaps he was forbidden to drink from a certain stream or spring. Or he might have been required never to wear a particular color, or to eat only with his right hand, or to brand and castrate horses only of a given color. Some taboos were burdensome. Others seem to us today rather laughable.

With the taboos, however, the guardian spirit also bestowed privileges. There were many different kinds of power. In a sense, the word meant what "talent" or "gift" means to us. A man could have prayer power, healing power, witching power, power to defeat witches, power to prophesy, or power to find lost objects and children. Others had power to break horses, make arrows, hunt, fight, or discover good campsites or water. "Power" was a broad term, covering the good and bad forces within

human beings that dominate human lives.

Perhaps a guardian spirit gave a young man the power to ride through a hail of bullets and emerge unscathed. Perhaps it instructed a man where to lead a raiding party and how to return successful. And perhaps because of his power, a man could be first of his family to eat or could claim certain gifts from his friends.

Often a man who acquired a guardian spirit was required by it to change his name. The many Kiowa bear names are an example of this practice. To all the Kiowas the bear was a sacred animal. It could not be killed except in an emergency; its flesh could not be eaten; its skin could not be worn. It was taboo even to apply the word "bear" to the animal. But many Kiowa leaders had bear names, of which Sitting Bear, White Bear, Stumbling Bear, and Running Bear are only a few examples. These names had come to their owners from power quests.

Sometimes a man could tell his vision. Other men were forbidden by the spirit guardian to reveal it. Sometimes a spirit guardian ordered his human brother to form a society of spiritual brothers, or to call his friends together informally in order to share his power with them. In that case, all members of the group knew what the power was and were fully instructed in its care and use.

Sometimes men who were known to possess great power went to their graves without telling what it was. To have spoken of the power would have turned it against its user.

## Ten Grandmothers

Next in antiquity to the pantheistic power concept among Kiowa sacred beliefs and practices was the religion of the Ten Grandmothers. Power was an intensely personal thing, belonging to one person and shared, at most, with his close friends. But the Grandmothers belonged to all the Kiowas. They were once described by a Kiowa who had grown up with them as "A spiritual vacuum cleaner." He went on to say that the Ten Grandmothers "sucked all the bad things out of the air, so they didn't get to the Kiowas. That way, as long as they take care of the Ten Grandmothers, the Kiowas are safe."

There are several legends about the origin of the Grandmothers. Some believe that Sunboy, the original Kiowa, was struck in half, forming twins. One twin fell into a lake and the other broke into ten pieces, each piece becoming a Grandmother. Some anthropologists think the original twin gods were rock formations, one of which might have been shattered by an earthquake. Mose Poolaw, a Kiowa Baptist church worker, thinks the Grandmothers are based on the Ten Commandments taught to the Kiowas by an early Jesuit. No matter

which tale is correct, the Kiowas worshipped the Grandmothers.*

Like all cleansing media, the Grandmothers, in their turn, had to be cleansed. This symbolic and ritual cleaning was performed when all the Grandmothers and their keepers were gathered in one place. There, during four days and nights, the legend of how the Grandmothers came to the Kiowas was told, and the songs accompanying it were sung.

One hundred different ritual procedures were performed. The count was kept with painted sticks, which the priest moved from one side of him to the other as the ceremony progressed. The tipi in which the ceremony was held had to be darkened. The contents of the physical bundles that contained the Grandmothers were too sacred for even priests to look at.

The bundles were not large. They were kidney-shaped rawhide cases, once painted with earth colors, but later faded by time and polished by handling to a uniform walnut brown. Between ceremonies, each bundle hung in the tipi of one of its guardians, at the back, above the seat of honor. No one might walk betwen the bundle and the fire, or there would be sickness. If water was thrown against the tipi wall, there would be a flood. If a child accidentally struck the tipi with a hand or a toy, there would be war. If the tipi caught fire, prairie fires would rage across the Southern Plains. "It was hard work, taking care of those Grandmothers," said Sitting Bear's son, one of the guardians.

Each bundle had two guardians, a man and a woman. Originally, perhaps, these had been brother and sister, but by the 1870's the lines of descent had crossed, recrossed, died out, and intertwined, so that some of the paired guardians were not known to be related in any way. The positions were inheritable, a guardian designating his or her successor within his family.

The bundle usually stayed in the tipi of the younger and stronger of its guardians. If it was kept by a man, his wife was responsible for moving it from one camping place to another. Reverently, she lifted the rawhide case from its place in the tipi and fastened it to her saddle. She rode a quiet horse, usually a mare, and took care that the bundle should never touch the ground or brush against another rider's horse. The woman guardian of a Grandmother cared for her bundle in the same way.

Nine of the original Grandmother bundles are in existence today, and offerings are still made to them. The tenth was destroyed by fire in the late

*Tom Sharrock, "Sacred Grandmothers Seek a Resting Place," *The Lawton Constitution-Morning Press*, March 5, 1967.

1930's. Many older Kiowas believe this catastrophe brought about World War II. The bundle may or may not have been replaced since.

The last priest with the specific power to clean the bundles died in the 1860's, and presumably the Grandmothers have not been opened since that time. In the 1870's, the bundles were cared for and venerated, and offerings were made to them, but they were not opened. The Kiowas are now debating whether or not to turn over the Grandmothers to a museum. Some older Kiowas want this because the Grandmothers do not seem to have meaning to younger Kiowas.*

## Sun Dance

The most conspicuous religious event among the Kiowas of the 1870's was the "Sun Dance." Kiowa accounts agree that the tribe had not known this ritual for long at that time. It was given to a Kiowa man sometime in the 1830's when he visited an Arapaho friend. The gift was probably an ordinary transfer of power, but a power that required the attendance and participation of all the Kiowas who could reach the scene.

Most North American Indian tribes held midsummer gatherings that were more or less religious in nature. All were social events involving the exchange of news and opinion, and occasions also for courting and for trade. Visitors came and went, and open-handed hospitality was extended to them all.

But from time to time each Plains Indian tribe dedicated a midsummer gathering to a dance known most commonly and widely as the Sun Dance or Willow Dance. This dance was an offering and a sacrifice to all the powers of nature, although prayers were most frequently addressed to the sun itself. Grass and the buffalo, the sun's children and its gifts to mankind, were also recognized with prayer during the dance.

The Kiowa Sun Dance time began in early June, when the Sun Dance priest, guardian of the bundle that contained the ritual objects for the ceremony, rode out to notify all the Kiowa bands where to gather for the dance. From the day that they were notified until the dance ended, the Kiowa people were supposed to keep their hearts and minds clean—to speak gently, to walk softly, to be happy, and to be kind. War parties set out from camp before or after Sun Dance time, never during it. Large communal hunts were scheduled to take place earlier or later. Excitement, confusion, or unhappiness would destroy the power of the dance.

When all the people had gathered, and the bands had pitched their tipis in assigned places facing the center of

*Ibid.

the great camp circle, four days of preparation began. During this time, the Sun Dance lodge was built under the direction of the priest and his "shields," these being men who always accompanied and guarded the priest and the bundle. The duty of directing all the men who took part in the physical construction of the lodge was assigned to one of the men's soldier or dancing societies. The task of cleaning up and keeping order in the camp was assigned to another group. These tasks were assigned by the Sun Dance priest.

An albino buffalo was hunted, and, if found, was shot with a single arrow by a man who had inherited the right to make this sacrifice. If no albino could be found, he killed a yearling buffalo calf with a single arrow. He gave the meat to the priest and his shields. The hide was roughly dried in the sun, and then anyone who wished tied an offering to it. When all the gifts had been secured, the skin was hoisted into the crotch of the lodge center pole.*

The cottonwood tree for the center pole of the lodge was cut by a captive woman. "It was too dangerous for them to risk one of their own," a former priest reported. During the dance, women were not supposed to enter the lodge; only men could step under its sheltering willow-shade, away from the naked blaze of the midsummer sun. Nothing red—fabric, paint, or vessel—could be brought near the lodge. The color of blood would heat the dancers.

During the Sun Dance time, the recognized leaders of the different bands met as an informal council. They discussed contacts with other Indian tribes and with the oncoming whites. They agreed on grazing and hunting ranges for each band for the coming year. They delivered long speeches, filled with fine oratorical flourishes, to "encourage" and instruct the young men. They inflicted punishment on known violators of laws. Above all, the council informed its members of the range and scope of Kiowa activities in the year just past.

During the Sun Dance time, too, the camp was kept in order, announcements were published, and work details arranged. Most general activities came under the direction of the men's dancing societies. There were several of these: the Gourd Dancers, the Black Leggings, the Ohoma, and the Herders, to name some of them. There was also

*Detailed information on the general pattern of the Plains Sun Dance can be found in Clark Wissler's *The American Indian* (3d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1938) and in Leslie Spier's *The Sun Dance of the Plains Indians* ("Anthropological papers of the American Museum of Natural History," vol. xvi, pt. vii, 1921). Specific information on the Kiowa Sun Dance can be found in Alice Marriott's *The Ten Grandmothers* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945).

the little boys' group known as Rabbit Dancers.

Young men danced, instructed by their elders. A man chose his sponsor and danced in the same place in the lodge where his sponsor had formerly danced. Originally these positions had been assigned on the basis of band membership, individuals occupying the same places in the lodge circle which their families' tipis did in the camp circle. After a few years, however, as sponsors were chosen from bands to which the dancers did not belong, this plan was lost.

A man danced in place, flexing his knees up and down. He held his eyes fixed on a point on the center pole to which his sponsor had directed them. The sponsor himself had once stared rigidly at the same spot. Each dancer held an eagle wing-bone whistle between his teeth, and the shrilling of the whistles overran the singers who pounded on a rolled rawhide. Women sat just outside the lodge door and sang with the men, "to encourage the dancers."

Kiowa dancers tortured themselves during the Sun Dance. They gashed the skin of shoulders or chest and passed rawhide thongs through the cuts. The thongs were then tied to the center pole. Leaning backward while they danced, the men tried to pull the thongs loose by breaking the skin. Some men tied buffalo skulls to their backs with thongs and dragged the skulls through the camp until the skin tore loose. As late as the middle 1930's, many older men still showed their Sun Dance scars and boasted of their strength to the younger people.

Women did not cut or tear their skin during the Sun Dance, but a woman who had lost a relative during the year might, as a sign of mourning, cut off a finger joint, or even a whole finger, for a Sun Dance offering. A woman who had vowed to sacrifice if a loved one recovered from illness or returned from war could do the same. Women might make any other kind of offering they wished, such as a horse, a bolt of fabric, a painted hide, or some other treasure.

Women could ask their brothers to represent them by dancing in the lodge. When a man consented, the woman sat behind her brother, but outside the lodge proper. She fasted and smoked as he did.

The last true Sun Dance that the Kiowas held is described in this book, and it was kept up for several years after the events that close this book. Later dances were felt to be only "imitation Sun Dances," because it was no longer possible to obtain a buffalo skin for an offering and the skin of an ordinary cow's calf had to be substituted. In 1880, when the last Sun Dance priest died, a gathering of men from all the bands decided to "put away" the Sun

Dance. Although the ritual objects used in the dance still exist and are reverently cared for, the Kiowas have never tried to hold the dance since it was put away. "It is there and we love it, but we let it rest."*

## Christianity

By 1870, Christian missionaries had entered the Kiowa country, and had made some converts. A few years earlier, an Iowa Quaker, Friend Thomas Battey, had felt the call to go to the western Indians and teach them Christ's word. He had gone first to the old Caddo-Wichita Agency, north of the present town of Anadarko, Oklahoma, where he found the Wichita and Caddo children "wild and undisciplined, but not incapable of learning." Soon other Friends joined him, and their school and home for orphans flourished. But Battey needed wider horizons. Again he heard God's call, and, in self-confessed fear and trembling, pointed his buggy team westward, to the Kiowa and Comanche hunting lands.

Battey first encountered Sitting Bear's band, where he was not well received. The Kiowas were quite able to teach their children the things men and women needed to know to live in the world, Sitting Bear informed him. He added that his people already had two or three perfectly good religions and did not need another one. His final remark was that he did not like having white men around at any time. Sitting Bear, who strenuously resisted white intrusion, was probably voicing the opinion of the majority of Kiowas at that time.

Not discouraged, although he admitted to being "uneasy and afraid," Battey continued south and west, and, on Stinking Water Creek—now Medicine Creek, near Fort Sill, Oklahoma—he met Kicking Bird and was invited into his camp. Battey told Kicking Bird, in sign language, how Sitting Bear had treated him.

Sitting Bear and Kicking Bird were already rivals for control of all the Kiowa bands. Each had a strong following. When Kicking Bird heard Battey's story, he did what he thought any right-minded Kiowa should do. He invited Battey to stay on with his band at Stinking Water Creek, to teach the children, as well as Kicking Bird and his wives, the rudiments of English, Christianity, and "the three R's." Kicking Bird added as an afterthought that he was sure Battey would be glad to advise him as to the best way of overcoming Sitting Bear. He was sure Battey's power must be as strong as his rival's.

Whether Kicking Bird was a pro-

*An abortive attempt to present the dance as a spectacle, which took place in 1951, is described in Alice Marriott's *Greener Fields* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1962).

gressive and farseeing benefactor of his people, as most of his descendants and their white friends have claimed, or a traitor to the cause of human freedom, as his opponents' descendants still declare, cannot be debated here. The fact remains that he made Battey welcome to his camp partly because that was one way he could annoy Sitting Bear. Battey's account of the incident makes this perfectly clear.

Kicking Bird and many of his band accepted Christianity. Some became Quakers. Others were converted to the newly introduced Baptist and Methodist faiths. A few followed the example of Army officers they knew and became Episcopalians.

In 1870, General Philip Sheridan established Fort Sill. Army chaplains added their efforts to those of missionaries who lived in the Kiowa villages. Most of the southern portion of the tribe, who lived near Fort Sill, became converts, with the Baptists among them being the most numerous.

## EFFECTS OF THE WHITE MEN ON THE KIOWAS

The coming of the white men onto the Plains changed Kiowa customs.

### Burial

No longer could bodies be left exposed in open places. Sometimes the whites robbed the dead; sometimes they burned the tipi and its contents. Always they insisted on burial in the ground, a custom that seemed to the Kiowas cruel and obscene.

### Kiowa Names

The white men instituted their own custom of family names and referred to children by the names their fathers used. Once, the names of the dead had been screamed at one another by quarreling women, as curses. Now they were spoken every day, or at least every day that the Kiowas were in contact with the whites.

## The Giveaway

The giveaway must go, the white men said. It was absurd for a man to impoverish himself, and to let his family go hungry, in order to show other people how great he was. Giveaways were wasteful and extravagant and must be stopped. The latest known Kiowa giveaway was held in July, 1967. The Kiowas gave up many of their old ways and beliefs, but the giveaways have persisted and will probably endure.

## Captivity

After the death of Sitting Bear and the captivity of Lone Wolf and White Bear, the Kiowas scattered onto the *Llano Estacado* (or Staked Plains) of the Texas Panhandle like blown leaves before a high wind. They were rounded up and brought back to Fort Sill, where they were held for the winter in the stone corral the troops had built the year before, and from which the artillery and cavalry horses had been hastily removed to the picket lines near the parade ground. Nobody took the time and trouble to clean out the corral before the Indians were driven into it.

The winter of 1872-73 was the low point of Kiowa morale. The people were starving and racked with new diseases—coughs, colds, pneumonia, smallpox, and tuberculosis, in particular—which the troops had brought west with them.

The Kiowas had lost all their material possessions. The buffaloes were gone, and with the buffaloes went the men's jobs. When the people were sent out in the spring of 1873, and directed to stay in one place and learn to farm, like Caddos or Wichitas, the Kiowas were apparently a defeated people.

## Water

Probably the most keenly-felt result of white settlement in the Southern Plains was the usurpation of the water supply. Settlers homesteaded near springs or along clear-running streams, thus cutting the Kiowas off from sources of water they had relied on as long as they had lived in the area. Erosion from rain and wind cut into the plowed land, and Oklahoma's shallow quicksand rivers ran red with the earth's lifeblood. Not even river water was available for the Indians to drink.

## Society and Economy

In the years immediately following that shattering winter of captivity, for the first time some Kiowa women became publicly known as promiscuous. Once, their brothers would have beaten them, or outraged husbands would have cut off their noses. But in this time of deadly changes, a few women slipped out of camp at night to find soldiers or traders. These men sent the women

back at daylight with food enough to supply the family camp for a few days, or with beads the women could work up into trinkets to trade for food.

The buffaloes were gone; the old free busy life was gone with them. Now, the young men, with nothing to hunt and no enemies that they could fight, sat around camp all day and grew lazy and fat. There were young women here and there raising half-breed families. Women who had not even canvas for tipis huddled their families into conical brush shelters like those the Kiowas may have lived in during the faraway northern days of their history.

Coffee and sugar and white flour and lard had once been luxuries to be obtained by trading good horses to the Mexicans. Now, with rancid bacon and rotting blankets left from supplies gathered for the Army during the Civil War, they were doled out to the Kiowas by their government-appointed agent.

The head of every family was issued ration tickets, one for each member of his household. These could be exchanged, on issue days at Fort Sill, for food and blankets. Ration days were staggered, so that relatively few Kiowas at a time would congregate at the Army post.

As soon as a family returned home with its rations, relatives and friends moved in. Everyone feasted happily until the supply of food was gone. Usually it was exhausted before the next relatives in the extended family enjoyed an issue day. But morale had been maintained. The old tradition of generosity and openhanded hospitality had been upheld.

These were bad, sad times, and it is little wonder that quarrels and feuds arising in those years have persisted.

## KIOWA ADAPTABILITY

Finally, the Kiowa gift, or power, of adaptability again asserted itself.

### Men

The Kiowas were never farmers, and they are not farmers now. The skills that had been applied to build up large horse herds could be applied to cattle breeding. Some Kiowas returned to horse breeding, and as long as horse-drawn artillery remained in use at Fort Sill, they had a market for their horses.

Later, other Kiowas became successful cattlemen.

## Women

The women, too, adapted themselves to changing conditions. If tipis could not be made of buffalo hides, they could be cut from canvas. Dresses and shirts, also, could be cut from fabrics with the same knives and in the same patterns that had served for skin garments. The women still owned the tipis, and they still made the clothes.

Nobody particularly liked beef at first, but Kiowa women learned to butcher and dry and cook it as they had buffalo meat and venison. There was no disgrace associated with eating beef, especially if the steer had first been driven into a hard run and then shot. However, a woman who had kept her family alive during the wickedly cold winter of 1872 by feeding them dried jack-rabbit meat afterward admitted that she had prepared the meat during the summer nights by white moonlight. She had been ashamed to let others in the camp see that her husband could find no game larger than jack rabbits to bring home.

## Religion

And yet, the Kiowas lived through their time of grief and came out on the other side. That they did so was due partly to their ingrained adaptability, partly to two religious forces which reached them almost simultaneously and which still exist side by side in the Kiowa world. These are the Baptist Church and the Native American Church. Baptist missionaries were sent out from the east and lived with the Kiowas, as the Kiowas lived. Through dirt, disease, and poverty, they endured, and their Kiowa followers became strong and prosperous people by following the missionaries' examples.

The Native American Church came to the Kiowas in the early 1880's. It was based on a religion dating from Aztec times in Mexico, which spread northward slowly, through the Apache groups, then to the Comanches, and from them to the Kiowas. In the old form of the religion, the participants met at night, sat around a fire, prayed, sang, and offered tobacco and cedar incense. At intervals during the rites, the members of the group ate buttons from the mescal cactus, *Lophophora williamsii Lemaire*. The plant was known by a contraction of its Aztec name, *peyotl*, as "peyote."

In the Native American Church, the old rituals were combined with missionary teachings. The eating of peyote was equated with the taking of bread and wine in Christian Communion Services. The Church taught the love of God, the brotherhood of men, and preached unity of spirit among all Indians. The Native American Church

is a healing religion and places great emphasis on comforting as well as curing the sick.

This church has been attacked by missionaries, government bureaus, and the United States Congress. Whether the objections to it arise from the idea of all-night gatherings in a tipi, or from the mild auditory and visual hallucinations induced by eating peyote, is immaterial. The charges against peyote, which is listed for medicinal use in the United States Pharmacopoeia, are that it is narcotic and habit-forming. Actually, peyote is neither.

Members of the Native American Church take pride in being clean, progressive, generous, and prosperous people, for their own lives are the best defense of their religion that they can offer. Their children are well educated and well dressed, and receive good medical care in the white man's world. The Church is constantly on trial, and its members endeavor to meet each challenge without bitterness, but firmly.

## SUMMARY

The Kiowas were never a very large group. They numbered 1,500 in 1870. In 1920, their number had sunk to 1,000. Today, two generations later, the Kiowas are nearly 2,000 strong.

The Kiowas have acquired technologies and skills from white culture and are using them. While other tribes have continued with stock-raising, the Kiowas have made their lives in cities. Original allotment provided each Kiowa with 160 acres of land. Subdivision of the land among Kiowa descendants has deprived the young people of the lands that were allotted to their grand-parents in 1907, so, even if they wanted to, modern Kiowas could not earn their living from the land.

They come from the cities in the summer, and they gather for a dance. They pitch white canvas A-tents, and they gather willows and construct brush arbors. Friends and visitors come in; everyone is welcome, and everyone is fed. The big shiny new cars are parked around the curve of the dance arena, except where it is open at the east. The United States flag flies from a pole, and Fort Sill sends a bugler in the band

uniform of the 1870's, in honor of White Bear and the bugle he captured from the soldiers.

But they come with college degrees and union membership cards. They wear sports clothes, and the girls are helmeted with hair curlers.

Modern Kiowas have fitted into the life of the modern world, while they have retained much of their old culture and traditions. They are opinionated, hard as nails, and thoroughly adaptable. They are proud: always and forever, you shall know them—THE KIOWAS.



*Sitting Bear's War Shield* still shows his protection of his people. (Photo credit: Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey)

# GLOSSARY

*Aho:* "Thank you;" used throughout the Plains
*Arrowhead River:* Arkansas River
*Big Bend:* northward curve of the Washita River, in Kiowa County, Oklahoma
*Black Shiny Hills:* Glass Mountains, Texas County, Oklahoma
*Broken Mountains:* Davis Mountains, Jeff Davis County, Texas
*Cross Timbers:* a natural barrier of low-growing trees and thick underbrush, cutting across country from the Gulf Coast of Texas to the Ozark Uplift in Missouri and dividing eastern from western Oklahoma
*Cut Throat Gap:* a gap in the Wichita Mountains, Comanche County, Oklahoma
*Daw Sayndaym!:* "You're just like Saynday;" a laughing term of reproach most often used in speaking to children
*Devil's Tower:* a butte in the Black Hills, South Dakota
*Edge of the Mountains:* northern flank of the Wichita Mountains, Comanche County, Oklahoma
*End of the Mountains:* western end of the Wichita Mountains, Kiowa County, Oklahoma
*Granite Mountains:* Wichita Mountains, Comanche and Kiowa counties, Oklahoma

***Grullo:*** a blue-gray horse, usually of Arabian bloodline

***Haw:*** a general expression of agreement and assent used throughout the Plains

***Medicine Lodge:*** site of an 1866 treaty between the Plains Indians and the white men, in southeastern Kansas

***Mountains Standing:*** Wichita Mountains, Comanche and Kiowa counties, Oklahoma

***Na-na-na-na:*** an expression of approval

***North Fork:*** the north fork of the Canadian River, running through Oklahoma City

***Peace Spring:*** a large artesian spring north of the present site of Tucumcari, New Mexico; a famous trading place for Plains and Southwestern Indians

***Red Rock Standing:*** location of the old Caddo, Wichita, and Delaware Agency, north of Anadarko, Oklahoma

***River That Runs Red:*** Red River

***Saddle Mountain:*** a double peak in the Wichita Mountains, located partly in Comanche County and partly in Kiowa County, Oklahoma; a famous local landmark

***Salt Plains:*** Great Salt Plain, near Alva, Oklahoma

***Saynday:*** the Kiowa trickster-hero; a force for good or mischief, and the principal character in the "little" or "how" stories told to children in the winter months

***Spider Grandmother:*** a major character in the "great" or religious myths told to explain the origin of the Ten Grandmothers

***Staked Plains:*** the high plains country of the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles, extending south of Amarillo to Lubbock, Texas, and west into southeastern New Mexico; originally occupied by Lipan and other Plains Apache groups; a translation of the Spanish *Llano Estacado,* so called because the early traders are said to have staked routes across this dead-level grassland from one water hole to the next

***Stinking Water Creek:*** Medicine Creek, north of Fort Sill in Comanche County, Oklahoma; a highly mineralized creek where the Kiowas and the Comanches went to cure sickness by drinking and bathing in the water; the site of several health resorts today

***Taos Pueblo:*** the most northern and eastern of occupied pueblos in the Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico, since the eighteenth century. Tanoan, the language of this pueblo, is a possible linguistic affiliate of Kiowa. Taos, alone among the pueblos, has many Plains aspects in material and nonmaterial culture.

***Tipi Pole River:*** Washita River

***Twin War Gods or Half Boys:*** the grandsons of Spider Grandmother and the central characters of Kiowa religious myths; said to have slain monsters, overcome enemies, and brought back trophies of their triumphs. Each of the Ten Grandmothers supposedly contains one evidence of the Twin War Gods' exploits.

***Wo-haws:*** cattle, particularly steers; the word is derived from the shouted commands of oxcart teamsters at the first cattle that the Kiowas saw.

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